



UNFLINCHING FAITH

Actor Pooja Hegde reveals that she excitedly agreed to do Rohit Shetty's *Cirkus* without asking any details

LEISURE P2



MONSTER STORM

At least 23 people die in the US winter storm as bone-chilling cold continues to grip the country

INTERNATIONAL P10



THRILLING WIN

R Ashwin and Shreyas Iyer come to India's rescue as they script thrilling victory against Bangladesh

SPORTS P12

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SHORT TAKES

China returnee tests Covid +ve

Agra (UP): A 40-year-old man, who returned from China two days back, has tested positive for COVID-19 following which he has been isolated at his home here, officials said Sunday. His samples will be sent to Lucknow for genome sequencing. The man has been isolated at his home and teams of the health department have been asked to conduct tests of his family members and those who came in contact with him. The man returned to Agra from China via Delhi December 23 following which he was tested at a private lab.

Minor home help tortured; rescued

Bhubaneswar: Another case of inhuman torture on a minor domestic help by the unruly employers came to the fore after the 13-year-old victim was rescued by Childline, Bhubaneswar from an apartment in Palasuni area here Sunday afternoon. The victim who had serious injury marks on her body was rushed to capital hospital for treatment. Police have started investigation into the matter after registering a case (497/22) on the basis of a complaint lodged by the Childline.

China ready to work for 'steady growth' of ties

Beijing, Dec 25: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Sunday that China is ready to work with India for the steady and sound growth of bilateral ties and the two countries are committed to upholding stability at the border areas where tensions have prevailed since 2020.

Addressing a symposium on the international situation and China's foreign relations in 2022, Wang said both countries have maintained communication through diplomatic and military-to-military channels. "China and India have maintained communication through the diplomatic and military-to-military channels, and both countries are committed to upholding stability in the border areas," said Wang, who has been elevated to the ruling Communist Party of China's (CPC) high-power political bureau during the recent party Congress. "We stand ready to work with India in the direction toward steady and sound growth of China-India relations," he said at the symposium. Wang, along with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, is the Special Representative of the India-China boundary mechanism which has remained dormant in the present set of border standoffs. In his lengthy address on China's diplomatic work, Wang focused more on China's troubled ties with the US and burgeoning relations with Russia, despite the Ukraine war.

HOCKEY WC TROPHY BACK IN ODISHA



TROUPE & TROPHY: Denizens and artistes in Odissi attire welcome the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup trophy at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: After travelling across 13 states and a Union territory, the men's Hockey World Cup trophy made its way back to Odisha, as it is gearing up to host the sporting extravaganza next month. Elaborate security arrangements were made at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here, where officials arrived with the cup at around 11.30am. Jubilant scenes filled the air, as women and children donning traditional sarees danced to drumbeats. Crowds waiting on streets near the airport cheered as the trophy was brought outside by Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey and handed over to state Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera. Earlier, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took to Twitter to encourage people of the state to welcome the trophy in a grand manner. "It is indeed a proud moment for Odisha, as we host the Men's Hockey World Cup for the consecutive time. Let's all join in the state-wide Trophy Tour being planned across every district of Odisha to celebrate hockey coming home," he wrote. "Nowhere in the world is there a hockey stadium with a seating capacity of 20,000 people. Only Rourkela has built such a massive stadium for the world cup," Tirkey said. "It is a proud moment for all of us," he added. The trophy will now go on a state-wide tour of Odisha over the next three weeks and will travel around 30 districts.

Red menace on the wane

ODISHA REPORTS SHARP DROP IN NUMBER OF MAOIST ATTACKS IN 2021

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: More than 350 persons including security personnel were killed in Maoist attacks or Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) during the last 12 years. According to official data, 1,246 LWE attacks were reported in Odisha during the 12 years, in which 357 people (civilians and security personnel) were killed. So, on an average, each year 103 LWE incidents occurred in Odisha and 29 persons were killed by the Maoists between 2020 and 2021.

However, the figures suggest that the LWE activities are on a declining trend in the state. In Odisha, the number of LWE incidents has drastically come down to 32 in 2021 from 218 reported in 2010. Similarly, the resultant deaths (civilians and security forces) has been reduced from 79 in 2010 to 3 last year. The geographical spread of the LWE activities has also come down in the state. Now, only 10 districts have been covered under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE)



scheme of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Earlier, 19 districts were covered under the scheme, sources said. The SRE is a non-plan scheme and has been under implementation since April 1, 1996. The objective of the scheme is to supplement the efforts of the states to deal with the LWE problem effectively. The 10 SRE covered districts are Bargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada

and Sundargarh. Out of these 10 districts only three districts, Kandhamal, Malkangiri and Kalahandi, have been categorized as most affected LWE districts while Koraput has been categorized as a district of concern by the MHA. Informing about the economic and welfare activities undertaken by the government, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai recently told the Lok Sabha that more than 974 km of roads

Number of LWE incidents in Odisha has drastically come down to 32 in 2021 from 218 reported in 2010. Similarly, the LWE deaths have been reduced from 79 in 2010 to only 3 reported last year. Geographical spread of the LWE activities has also come down in the state with only 10 districts under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme of the MHA

have been constructed in the LWE affected areas of Odisha under two schemes. For improving telecommunication, 256 mobile towers have been installed while work orders have been issued for another 483 towers in the state. A total of ₹234.33 crore has been released to the most LWE affected districts of Odisha under the Special Central Assistance scheme to fill critical gaps in public infrastructure and services. **Contd...3**

Prachanda named new PM of Nepal

The surprise development may not bode well for India-Nepal ties as Prachanda, who is being appointed as the Prime Minister of Nepal for the third time, is seen as pro-China

Kathmandu, Dec 25: CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda was Sunday appointed Nepal's new Prime Minister, after the former guerrilla leader dramatically broke away from the five-party ruling alliance led by the Nepali Congress, ending the political uncertainty after last month's general elections failed to produce a clear winner. The surprise development may not bode well for India-Nepal ties as Prachanda and his main backer KP Sharma Oli have some run-ins with New Delhi previously over territorial issues. Prachanda, the 68-year-old leader of former communist rebels, was appointed as the Prime Minister of Nepal, according to a statement issued by the President's Office here.



The President had called any member of the House of Representatives, who can garner a majority with support from two or more parties as stipulated in the Article 76 clause 2 of the Constitution to submit a claim for the Prime Minister's post by 5pm Sunday. Prachanda submitted the claim before the deadline given by the President expired. The swearing in ceremony of the newly-appointed Prime Minister will take place at 4pm Monday, according to the President's Office. Prachanda along with his rival-turned ally CPN-UML chairman Oli among other top leaders earlier went to the President's Office with a proposal to appoint him as the new Prime Minister, sources said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Not needed. I'm going to a wedding and not to the Parliament.

WEATHER	
BHUB	CTK
MAX 23.6°C	31.6°C
MIN 14.7°C	15.0°C
Humidity 75%	88%
Rainfall Nil	Nil
Forecast: shallow to moderate fog very likely	

A TEMPLE EXCLUSIVELY FOR JEE, NEET WISHES

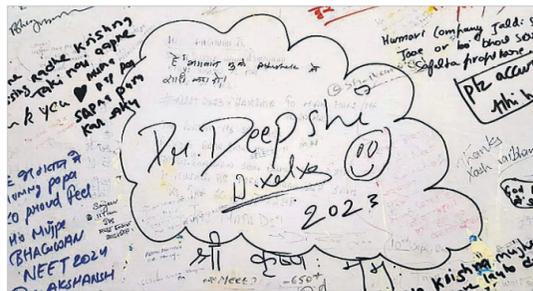
Kota students flock to scribble on 'wall of beliefs'

Initially seen as defacement by the temple authorities, the 'wall of beliefs' got its name after the temple became popular in early 2000 when a few students who had scribbled their prayers came out successful

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kota (Rajasthan), Dec 25: 'Please let me get selected in NEET 2023', 'Dear God, please give my concentration back', 'AIIMS Delhi please', 'IIT Delhi for me and Google for my brother' - these are not part of any diary but wishes scribbled on wall of beliefs at a temple here by scores of coaching centre students. Lakhs of students come to Rajasthan's coaching hub Kota every year with dreams of getting into some of the country's most prestigious engineering and med-

ical colleges, but many soon find themselves bogged down by hectic routines, peer pressure and the burden of expectations. According to the priests at the Radha Krishna temple in Talwandi area, the faith of students has been so strongly cemented over the years that the temple has to be repainted every two months. More than 300 students visit the temple daily, they said. A record two lakh students have enrolled in various coaching institutes here this year. Long back, when a few students came to pray here, they scribbled their wishes asking for their selection in IIT JEE or medical entrance tests. A few months later, parents of two students visited the temple and offered to make a donation for the temple claiming the wishes of their children scribbled on the wall have been fulfilled and



from there it became a trend. Initially, people used to write their wishes anywhere on the temple walls and we tried discouraging them citing defacement and also warned of action. But later when the faith of locals and students got cemented, we decided to make dedicated areas in the temple and called

it 'wall of beliefs', Kishan Bihari, one of the temple priests, told PTI. Another priest Trilok Sharma said the temple is repainted every two months because the walls often get filled with wishes and there is no space for others to write. "Whenever students come, we also give them blessings and prasad

and encourage them that God only helps when you do your best. Hardwork is the key. We keep talking to students and parents. At times we find students have even written the choice of their colleges or their ranks. We explain that it is good to manifest but it also has to be supplemented with efforts," he said. Battling with stress amid the cut-throat competition, the temple is also the place for students to meditate and feel better. "I have not written my wish on the wall yet, I will write it closer to the main exam when I have confidence in my preparation. But during my course, whenever I feel low or stressed, I come here and offer my prayers or do meditation to feel better," said Pragati Sahu, a National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) aspirant from Madhya Pradesh. **Contd...3**

2 minor sisters drown in pond

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nischintakoili, Dec 25: In a tragic incident, two minor sisters drowned in a pond at Madhuban village of Sukrapada panchayat under Nischintakoili block of Cuttack district Sunday. A pall of gloom descended on the village following the mishap. The deceased were identified as Chandini (8) and her sister Nalini (6). The sister duo went missing while playing near their house. Following a frantic search, the family members came to know that the two minor girls drowned in a nearby pond. The bodies were retrieved from the water body and sent for autopsy. Local police have registered a case of unnatural death in this matter. Notably, three minor boys had drowned Friday while taking bath in a pond at Bagapatia village under Rajnagar police limits in Kendrapara district.

leisure



WINSLET BREAKS CRUISE'S BREATH-HOLDING RECORD

Hollywood actress Kate Winslet is poking fun at Tom Cruise after breaking one of his impressive records. While filming *Avatar: The Way of Water*, Winslet famously held her breath underwater for seven minutes and 47 seconds, reports People magazine.

ADELE SENDS HER BEST WISHES TO MEGAN AFTER TORY LANEZ VERDICT

British singer Adele is saying 'Hello, it's me' to Megan Thee Stallion and is sending her love this holiday season after rapper Tory Lanez was convicted of shooting Megan in July 2020.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Logic and reasoning will hold court, while creativity takes a backseat today. There are challenges at work, but you are a dynamo and will meet them upfront. All tensions will be relieved by the loving touch of your near and dear. Such is life, sums up Ganesh.

TAURUS
It will be an optimistic day with its share of day dreaming, says Ganesh. You will be submissive at work, giving in or blindly following the advice of your peers. Things at work may be tense and cause some trouble today afternoon, but they will be much more to your liking by nightfall as you return to the comfort of your beloved and your home.

GEMINI
You will be in a spot of bother owing to financial problems today. You will try to reduce your expenses and increase your savings, but circumstances will be such that you will have to spend your money. You will spend your day in all this financial jugglery, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You may get a gift from your life partner. Ties with business partners will be good and you will get a good news from them. Time to make new plans for the future with spouse. You will feel greater companionship with spouse, giving you joy.

LEO
Decisions taken in haste will prove to be harmful. You need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of every decision that you take today, considering all the possible alternative thoroughly. You need to be extremely industrious on the work-front as well. You will feel very energetic and raring to go.

VIRGO
Something you achieve in a most unexpected manner will make you very happy today. But your happiness may possibly be marred by getting agitated about the problems you are facing. You may expect new funds for new projects, says Ganesh. Your business will flourish today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will be able to see a huge change in your personal and social status. Ganesh says that this may be due to medium like television or due to your innovative ideas in your work place. People will be praising you and your work today. You will be more interested in the fine arts.

SCORPIO
Your energy levels are on an all time high today, as you plan to begin a new business venture. You are determined to give in your best and toil hard till you succeed in your plans. Well, and the day turns out to be fruitful and worthy when you garner compliments and positive feedback about your work from your peers, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
You take the path of spirituality for the peace of mind and to stay away from the daily humdrum of life. You will not only seek love, but also spread love around you. In a nutshell, a pleasant day in store for you, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have become workaholic and others may have complains against you for being so busy. But, you should not take to heart as you are finishing off assignments which have been hanging in there for a long time now. Once done with the work, you'll have ample of time for your lover. You'll make up for not taking time out for him/her during the first half of the day, feels Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You have done backbreaking work to come this far. Today, you will see your efforts come to fruition. But, you need to be aware about the presence of the green-eyed people around you, especially if you are in some kind of a business, warns Ganesh. Take care of your health.

PISCES
You will find yourself ecstatic now that certain important projects you have been slaving over are nearing completion. You will implement new strategies and will hope that everything goes according to plan. You will experience intimate moments with your partner.

SARA on a wrap up spree

Mumbai: Actress Sara Ali Khan is on a wrap up spree. After finishing the shoot of *Ae Watan Mere Watan*, she went to the UK to kick start the shoot of her next film.

Shooting for her fourth film of the year, the actress wrapped up the hectic month of December and shot for her last scene of the year, 2022.

She will be back on the schedule of the film again in January after the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Taking to her social media, Sara shared a picture from the sets of her ongoing project as she wrapped up the project. While expressing her excitement to shoot her last shot of the year. She captioned the post: "And that's a wrap on December 22! Just gave the last shot of the year. See you now in 2023."

In the selfie with her team, Sara can be seen donning the action avatar with a few bruises on her face. She is reportedly shooting for Jagan Shakti's next

film alongside Tiger Shroff in London.

Sara will be next seen in *Gaslight* opposite Vikrant Massey, Maddock Films' next opposite Vicky Kaushal, *Ae Watan Mere Watan*.



Pooja agreed to do *Circkus* without asking any details

Mumbai: Pooja Hegde revealed that she excitedly agreed to do *Circkus* without asking any details, just because she got an opportunity of working with Rohit Shetty.

She said, "I was at home and I actually missed the call. (Rohit) Sir had called my old number and I had his number saved as 'Rohit Shetty - the director'. I was like mom Rohit Sir has called me and she asked me to call him back. I was so excited. When I called him, I was so excited."

She went on to add, "So like every actor, I had a list of directors I wanted to work with and Rohit Sir was there on that list. When he told me, I was shrieking on top of my voice. And my response was 'Amazing Amazing'. He asked me 'Dates hai na?' and I was like, 'Free kar lenge Sir'. It was only at the end of the conversation when he said, 'Btw the actor is Ranveer Singh'. I was like 'wohoo!'"

Furthermore, the actress also asserted that she didn't care about the details of the film as far as it was a Rohit Shetty film.

Vicky opens up on poor faring of most movies

Mumbai: Uri actor Vicky Kaushal recently opened up on the dismal phase that Hindi film has been seeing in the last few years, in which some big budget and star studded movies have not done well.

Opening up on the same, Vicky said that he strongly believes that only good movies are working and that the audience have made their choice very clear. Elaborating further, the *Sardar Udham* actor quoted the examples of movies like *Bhool Bhulaiya 2*, *RRR* and *Drishyam 2*, saying that none of them fall into a similar genre, yet all of them did so well, since they were all well made movies.

The actor also added that though promotions and marketing are helpful, at the end of the day, it is only good content that sells. Vicky also said that apart from that, even the medium does not matter much since whether it is OTT or the big screen, what has to work will work regardless of that.

WHEN PANKAJ GETS EMOTIONAL

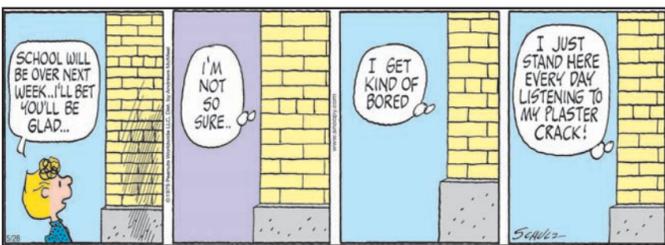
Mumbai: The first look of actor Pankaj Tripathi as former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee from the film *Main Atal Hoon* was released on his birthday anniversary on Christmas. It is directed by National Award winner Ravi Jadhav and will release in December next year. Pankaj is seen with in a dhoti-kurta and a jacket with prosthetics to resemble Atal Bihari Vajpayee. A video clip introduces him as a PM, poet, statesman and a gentleman.

Sharing his first look pictures from the film on Instagram, Pankaj Tripathi wrote in Hindi, "I know that it is necessary for me to work on my personality with restraint in order to make 'Atal' ji's personality come true on screen. I have firm faith that I will be able

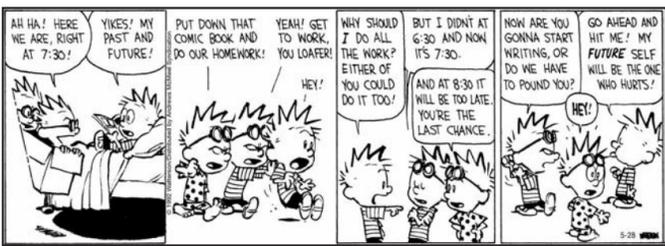


to do justice to my new role with enthusiasm and morale." He shared a video montage as well and wrote in Hindi, "I have got this opportunity to portray this rare personality on screen. I am emotional and grateful."

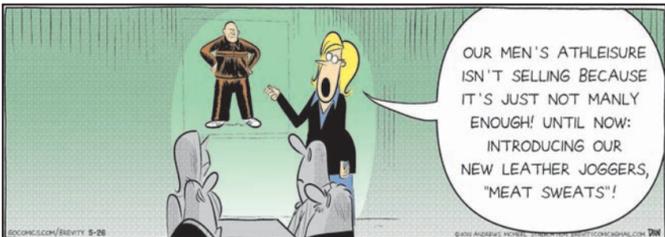
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

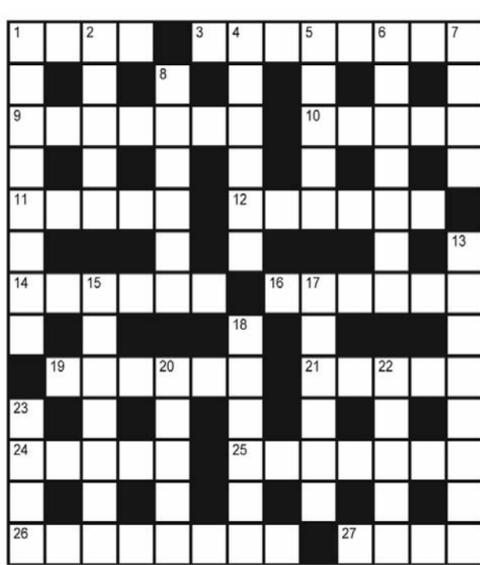


BREVITY



FUN post

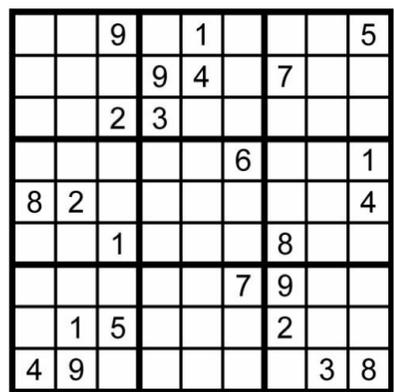
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Farm sound
 - 3 Cooking utensil
 - 9 Knuckle under
 - 10 Actor's line
 - 11 Inhabit
 - 12 Support, as a decision
 - 14 Anticipates
 - 16 Clean house (4,2)
 - 19 Exaggerate
 - 21 Length unit
 - 24 Blood line
 - 25 Mutilated
 - 26 One with the flock
 - 27 Hightailed it
 - Down**
 - 1 Volcanic glass
 - 2 Mother-of-pearl
 - 4 Vine holder
 - 5 Conflict
 - 6 Colourful fabric
 - 7 Grant basis
 - 8 Type of train
 - 13 Awesome!
 - 15 Hostile
 - 17 Kind of system
 - 18 Gabled extension
 - 20 Get through to
 - 22 Garden bulb
 - 23 Bridge option

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

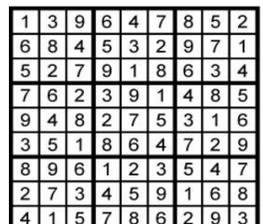


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

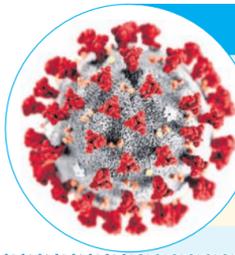


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CONCLUDING EVENT
 Governor Ganeshi Lal, among dignitaries, lit a lamp to mark the concluding day of diamond jubilee celebration of Sainik School, in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	66,17,11,220	63,41,78,985	66,85,775
India	4,46,77,106	4,41,42,989	5,30,693
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

13-year-old engaged as 'domestic help' rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: A 13-year-old girl, who was reportedly engaged as a domestic help for the past three years and tortured by her employer, was rescued from an apartment in Palasuni area under Mancheswar police limits here, a Childline official said, Sunday.

The minor with multiple injuries on her body was initially treated at Capital Hospital here before being produced before the child welfare committee (CWC). Later, she was sent to VJSS Open Shelter in Kalinga Vihar area of the City, it was learnt.

According to sources, the girl's parents, who have been residing in Pokhariput area of the City, are daily wage earners. The girl had been working as a domestic help at the residence of Ashok Kumar Swain, a private employee, in Palasuni area for three years now, said a Childline official.

About the rescue, the official said that Swain's neighbours, who



The minor girl was being brutally assaulted by her employer in Palasuni area under Mancheswar police limits of the City, as per Childline

often hear screams of the girl, Sunday, informed the Childline about the torture being meted out to the girl.

Soon after getting the information, Childline officials with the help of Mancheswar police rescued the girl. Swain, however, managed to flee the scene.

A senior official of Mancheswar police said that they would soon take Swain into custody.

Notably, police along with Childline officials had rescued an 11-year-old girl who was brutally assaulted by her employer and his family, December 6, 2022.

The minor girl had sustained multiple fractures in her hands, legs and other body parts, said sources.

The accused Bibhuti Pattanaik was arrested from Kaimatia under Info Valley police limits, it was learnt.

OUAT's 39th convocation today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: As many as 821 graduates, 510 postgraduates and 64 PhDs will be conferred

degrees in various disciplines during the 39th convocation of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) scheduled to be held here Monday.

OUAT Vice-Chancellor Pravrat Kumar Roul said in addition to it, 113 gold medals, six cash prizes will also be awarded for excellence in academic pursuit and co-curricular activities.

Governor and OUAT Chancellor Ganeshi Lal will preside over the



function and Union Agriculture Research and Education and DG ICAR, Himanshu Pathak is scheduled to grace the occasion.

Kisan Samman Diwas held at KVK Khurda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra- Khurda and ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA), Kausalyaganga, Bhubaneswar organised Kisan Samman Diwas recently at Belapada, Jatni, Khurda with support from the NGO Pratisruti.

On the occasion, ICAR-CIFA principal scientist and social science section head (I/C) GS Saha highlighted the major contributions of the farmers and farmwomen in agriculture and allied sectors and their pivotal role in achieving food and nutrition security. He enlightened the participants about different aquaculture technologies developed by CIFA for the economic upliftment of the farming community across the county.

KVK- Khurda senior scientist & head (I/C) AK Dash focused on the application of modern technologies in agriculture to enhance the production of agricultural crops and promotion of various agri-entrepreneurial activities for sustainable livelihood and nutritional security.

On this occasion, honorary doctorate degrees will be conferred on the Director General of the Meteorology department Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, and Susheel Sabarmati, the eminent organic farming practitioner and proponent.

The university has occupied 19th rank at the all India level as per ICAR ranking 2020 and received the 'University of the Year Award' in 2021.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



ECoR GM reviews infra projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: East Coast Railway general manager Roop Narayan Sunkar Sunday inspected Sambalpur-Jharsuguda Road - Kerejang Railway Section and reviewed several ongoing projects and infrastructural works in the region.

Apart from this, Sunkar also inspected traffic facility works of various railway sidings of different industries like Vedanta Limited, Brundamal, Bhusan Power & Steel Limited, siding at Lapanga, Aditya Aluminium Limited, siding at



Lapanga along with Freight examination facility with ROH facility at Sarla areas.

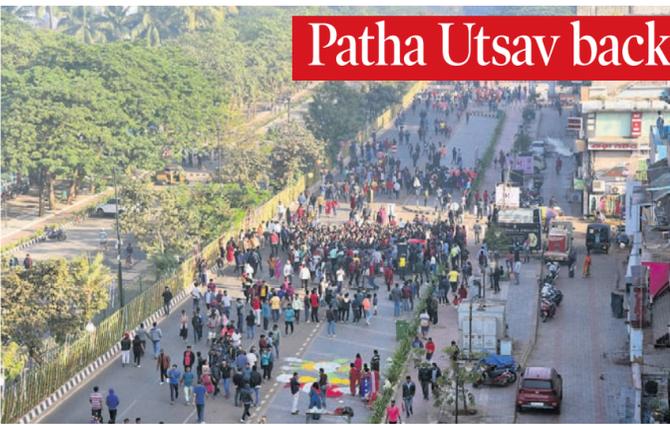
The general manager also inspected Sambalpur- Sambalpur City - Maneswar Doubling works of Talcher-Sambalpur Rail Line

Doubling project.

The Railway infrastructural projects in the region are a vital part of Gati Shakti which are being monitored directly by the Railways minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Vaishnaw advised railway officials to take necessary steps for early completion of the ongoing projects so that train traffic will be hassle free.

During the inspection Sunkar was accompanied by Sambalpur divisional railway manager Vineet Singh and other senior officials from head quarter and Sambalpur division.



Patha Utsav back with a bang

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Popular street festival Patha Utsav made a grand comeback on the smart Janpath after around two years of hiatus, Sunday.

The festival saw huge footfall between 6:30am and 9:30am from Ram Mandir to Master Canteen where people of all ages and groups gathered and enjoyed multiple activities like dance, music and street art.

The event also celebrated the welcome of Hockey World Cup trophy 'Chak De World Cup' in Bhubaneswar with many street art and rangoli.

Several rock bands and dance groups, including India's Got Talent winner Prince Dance Group, performed at the festival and entertained the revelers.

The festival was inaugurated with releasing of colourful balloons by BMC Mayor Sulochana Das, Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulture, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Aswini Patra, SSEPD Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera, Bhubaneswar (Central) MLA Ananta Narayan Jena and deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar.

City celebrates Christmas with gusto after two years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Christmas was celebrated with traditional fervour in the City as hundreds of people thronged churches from midnight for special prayers welcoming baby Jesus, Sunday.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wished people on the occasion. Taking to Twitter, Naveen said, "Warm greetings and best wishes to all on this joyous occasion of Christmas. As we celebrate the festive season, let's embrace the spirit of the Hockey World Cup! We wish you a very Merry Christmas."

The celebration began at midnight with a mass where devotees offered prayers by singing carols and lighting candles. A special tableau depicting birth of baby Jesus was also showcased. The St Vincent De Paul Pro Cathedral at Janpath here which was recently renovated held midnight mass. Prayers were also held at Church of Christ (Union Church), the oldest protestant church in City.

John Barwa, Arch Bishop of St Vincent's Pro Cathedral Catholic Church, said, "For the last two years, we have been celebrating Christmas with restrictions. But this year, we celebrated the festival with mass prayers with a gather-

Artist crafts Jesus in bottle

Bhubaneswar: L Eswar Rao of Jatri of Khurda district has created a miniature sculpture of Jesus Christ inside a glass bottle. Rao has created a 4-inch high and 2-inch wide sculpture of Jesus Christ with a crucifix inside a 750 ml bottle. He placed a cross with Jesus Christ on it, surrounded by two Christmas trees, with the message Merry Christmas in it. Rao has used chalk, glass, and glitter paper for the model. It took him seven days to create the miniature sculpture.

ing of devotees. The restriction of the last few years has made people realize the true meaning and importance of Christmas."

Meanwhile, Church of Christ followed observance of the festival with guidelines, including wearing of masks. Different malls of City got decked up to celebrate Christmas. A 40-ft high Christmas tree was unveiled at the Nexus Esplanade in Rasgarh area here. Utkal Kanika Galleria also decorated the mall with Christmas designs.

Continued from P1

Red menace on the wane

Under this scheme, various types of projects have been undertaken like road repair, improvement in health infrastructure, education related projects, rural infrastructure projects etc, he informed.

For educational empowerment, five Industrial Training Institutes and 10 skill development centres have been approved under the Skill Development Scheme in Maoist

affected areas of Odisha.

The Centre has also sanctioned 64 Eklavya Model Residential Schools for Odisha, of which 18 are functional. For financial inclusion, 49 bank branches, 95 ATMs and 1144 banking correspondents have been established in the LWE affected districts and 247 post offices have been opened in such areas in two phases in the last seven years.

Kota students flock to scribble...

Many of the wishes scribbled on the walls are also about gaining concentration and focus, removing negative thoughts besides wishes of making families back home proud.

The temple is not only popular among students but also their parents who make it a point to visit it whenever they come to pick or drop their wards. "When we came to Kota for admission of my son, we got to know about the temple. But we couldn't visit then and I also

thought its hardwork which fulfills these wishes and not writing on any wall. But many of my son's seniors, who made the wishes, got selected so I also decided to come this time and he has written his wish on the wall as well," said Priyanka Mittal, mother of a JEE aspirant.

Back-to-back lectures, test series, a constant race to outdo one's peers and trying to keep pace with the curriculum - this is what the average day of a student studying in a Kota coaching centre looks like.

Chilli sauce might help you regain your lost sense of taste

The news of a hot chilli sauce shortages earlier this year - due to high temperatures and drought in agricultural regions - prompted warnings to stock up on supplies or forego adding this flavour to your food. But what prompts people to want to do this in the first place?

We are usually born with an aversion to the sensations like the taste of chilli on our tongue. This isn't surprising because the key ingredient in chilli is a compound called capsaicin, which causes a painful and even burning sensation when it comes into contact with sensitive areas of our skin, eyes and mouth. Little wonder that it is also a key ingredient in pepper spray.

But in smaller, tolerable amounts, we can adapt to the sensations evoked by chilli and find them desirable. Chilli can even act as a natural opiate, making our bodies release endorphins in a similar way to a "runner's high".

We react to capsaicin because we have a family of receptors in sensory nerves lining the epithelial (outer) layers of our skin, naso-



oral and gastrointestinal tract. These bind to the capsaicin and relay signals to our brain.

What distinguishes the sensation compared to other flavours - for example, salty, sweet and bitter - is that it continues long after we have swallowed the mouthful of food containing the chilli. This is because capsaicin is soluble in fat so it is not easily washed off from its receptors on our tongue and mouth by drinking water. In this way, the sensation can intensify with further mouthfuls of chilli-containing food.

We experience capsaicin as a burning sensation that is amplified

when the temperature of the food is hot. Our brain interprets this as both pain and excessive warmth, which is why our facial skin flushes and we start to sweat.

Well, firstly, all that burning increases saliva production, a response that dilutes the heat as well as enhancing the ability to chew the food. This also dissolves and spreads other flavours in food around the tongue, which enhances the perception of these flavours.

Some volatile organic compounds with flavour can also rise up from the back of the mouth to the nasal sensors when the food is swallowed. Think of the pungent hit of wasabi

In smaller, tolerable amounts, we can adapt to the sensations evoked by chilli and find them desirable. Chilli can even act as a natural opiate, making our bodies release endorphins in a similar way to a "runner's high"

Burning sensation from chilli increases saliva production, a response that dilutes the heat as well as enhances the ability to chew food, helping dissolve and spread other flavours in food around the tongue, which enhances the perception of flavours

that comes with sushi or the complex mix of aromas in a Thai red curry. Relatively bland food like rice has its flavor increased by the addition of chilli.

Another factor is that endorphins are released in response to the painful stimulus, which provide their own pain-numbing and mood-enhancing effects. This is a similar situation to people who get addicted

to running - the effect of endorphins released by prolonged or intense exercise is to reduce feelings of pain and make us feel good.

One thing people have noticed as a frequent side-effect of Covid infection and some antiviral treatment is that their sense of taste and smell is temporarily reduced or lost.

While this eventually recovers in most people, it can go on long after the initial illness. Researchers have focused on the mechanisms through which the different COVID variants affect olfactory neurons (the parts of the brain that process and respond to smell) and supporting cells in order to find treatments. Chilli might also assist, as a taste enhancer.

One study by a meals company of 2,000 diners with COVID found 43% of them were increasing the amount of chilli and other spices they were adding to food to amplify the flavour of meals. Danish experts say eating foods like chilli might be useful to provide sensory stimulation to diners when their sense of smell isn't quite up to scratch.

THE CONVERSATION/PTI

Detachment is the beginning of mastery.

SRI AUROBINDO



Prophecies Failing

The mystery surrounding the origin of coronavirus, supposed to have either leaked from a laboratory in China's Wuhan or from sea food sold in the markets there, is yet to be unravelled due to China's persistent denial and noncooperation. Now, it is China again that has sparked fears about a fresh spike of CoVID-19 at a time when the world believed the pandemic was almost over. In fact, the latest surge in China takes place when in many places life appeared to be going back to pre CoVID normality in 2022 with countries scrapping pandemic-control measures. Governments across the globe ended lockdowns, reopened schools and relaxed or abandoned mask-wearing mandates. Likewise, international travel too had resumed as before.

People seemed to have come to terms with CoVID-19 in such a way that Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen declared months back that SARS CoV-2 no longer posed a threat to society. In September, US President Joe Biden remarked the pandemic was over. Even the Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, recently expressed hope that CoVID's designation as a global emergency will end in 2023. Alas, all prophecies seem to be failing.

Recent reports from China about fresh spurts in CoVID cases have shaken the confidence of the world in living with the dreaded disease. China is one of the last countries to ease pandemic-control measures in the face of the fast-spreading Omicron variant. Statistics provided by China have always been taken with a grain of salt since mendacity has been a trait of autocratic rule in China. Neither the Chinese government nor the Communist Party of China is known for transparency. The truth could be that China might have seen widespread transmission even before President Xi Jinping dropped the zero-CoVID policy during this current month in the wake of widespread protests against the ruthless implementation of his policy. Even scary scenarios are being predicted such as the prospect of about 1 million deaths in China over the next year, widespread absence of employees from workplaces and disruptions to the Chinese and global economy.

Before China is made to answer for pushing the world to the brink of CoVID disaster once again, facts need to be examined carefully. Most people in China are immunologically vulnerable to Omicron, the dominant strain now raging across countries. They have had no exposure to any SARS-CoV-2 variant. Even if they are vaccinated, they have received vaccines only against the virus' original strain. Even more waves of infections and deaths are likely to follow, caused by either new variants or by those contracted from outsiders with the country opening its borders to visitors.

There are further worries. CoVID-19 vaccination rates have stalled in many nations. In some, the record of administering the booster doses has been dismal, even though these doses substantially reduce death and severe illness. Efforts to supplement existing vaccines are underway, but success continues to elude scientists. For example, successful development of mucosal vaccines is still under process although some countries, like India, claim to have achieved it. These are to be delivered through the nose or mouth. China has approved an inhalable booster dose and a nasal vaccine and India a two-dose nasal-drop primary vaccine. Iran and Russia have also each approved a mucosal vaccine. But researchers are awaiting data to check whether any of these deliver on their promise of stopping SARS-CoV-2.

Now that the threat of return of the pandemic with all its fury appears to be real, vaccination efforts must be redoubled, especially in lower-income nations. The experience is more often than not vaccines for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) were delivered sporadically and in many cases close to their expiry date. This only compounded matters. The result is that only one-quarter of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

There is no doubt a sort of CoVID complacency had gripped the world as the caseloads dropped considerably. This led to lowering the guard. Not only did masks virtually disappear and other CoVID protocols thrown to the wind, health-care systems to fight the pandemic also suffered neglect from government agencies. Vaccination must be continued, especially for lower-income groups, many of whom have not received double doses, not to speak of the boosters. Winning half the battle is not enough. The pandemic devil, it now seems, needs to be fought for a long time to come.

WISDOM CORNER

- We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.**
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
- Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.**
MARK TWAIN
- The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.**
BERTRAND RUSSELL

WORDSWORTH

Ecofact

This is one of those specialist technical terms that lurk in the interstices of the language for a while, but then suddenly pop out, catching word researchers by surprise. Though it's well known in archaeology and has been around at least since the early 1970s, it appears only rarely in dictionaries. An ecofact is a find at an archaeological site which comes from something living, but which has not been modified by human activity. Examples are wheat seeds, sheep bones, or seashells at inland sites. Finds like these tell us something about the diet, way of life, or culture of the people who lived there. Something that has been created by people is an artefact (an artifact if you're American); ecofact was formed from it by blending it with ecology. The fact part of artefact comes from Latin factum, something made, so ecofact might mean something created from a living organism, exactly the opposite of the way archaeologists use it. However, it is equally possible to parse it as something made by a living organism, which would release archaeologists from the accusation that they're bad at etymology! Other terms of like kind include geofact, naturally fractured rock that looks as though it might have been manufactured by human action, but hasn't, and ventifact, something that has been shaped by wind-blown sand.

Ecologism

From the eighties onward, it became common to refer to different "shades" of environmentalism: someone who was obviously green in their opinions might be further categorised as dark green or deep green, implying they had a radical or fundamentalist approach to the need to preserve the environment. This radical end of the green movement has been given the name ecologism within the movement itself, though the word is still infrequent in general usage. Many greens distinguish between ecologism and environmentalism. The former is a fundamentalist philosophy of deep greenness — some would argue a political ideology, though not aligned anywhere along the traditional right versus left, capitalism versus socialism axis — with a strong spiritual component that seeks to preserve the environment in absolute terms without concern for the place of human beings within it and in particular without making allowance for the potential needs of future generations. To those holding such views, environmentalism is no more than a form of engineering which treats the environment as a resource to be manipulated or consumed while seeking to minimise pollution and other adverse effects; those espousing that approach are sometimes pejoratively described as shallow greens.

FOCUS DEVELOPMENT

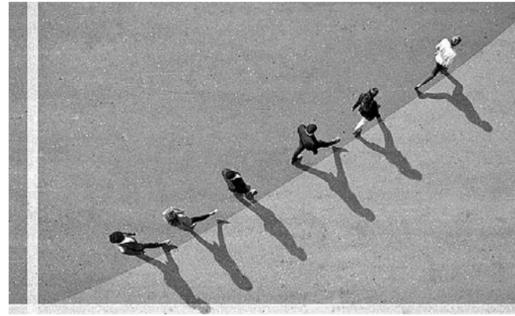
ALL PROGRESS IS LOCAL

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, humanity was making great strides in extending lives and increasing economic prosperity. It is critical that we return to that trajectory as the global economy recovers. New research, which examines progress at a granular level, can help us get there.

Typically, human progress is assessed at a country level. On average, the 178 countries where data are readily available have an area of 700,000 square kilometers, populations of some 40 million people, and produce around \$700 billion in GDP. But there obviously are vast differences across and within countries, and the effectiveness of efforts to enhance economic prosperity and human well-being depends on understanding these differences.

That is why our new report, Pixels of Progress: A Granular Look at Human Development Around the World, paints a picture that is 230 times more detailed than a country-level perspective. Using night-time luminosity and other cutting-edge techniques to gather and analyse data, we examine population patterns, economic performance, and changes in life expectancy from 2000 to 2019 across more than 40,000 microregions, each averaging 3,000 square kilometers in area, 180,000 people, and \$3 billion in GDP.

This approach revealed, for example, that in 2019, almost half of the world's population enjoyed living standards that, just 20 years earlier, had been attained by only 21% of humanity (largely in OECD countries). In 2000, 12 microregions along China's coast — with populations of 71 million — boasted life expectancies of more than 72.5 years and GDP exceeding \$8,300 per capita, putting them in the top 30% globally for both of these metrics. By 2019, 86% of



India in 2000 accounted for 43% of microregions where longevity was less than 65.6 years and income was lower than \$2,400 (the bottom 30% globally); in 2019, it no longer had a single microregion in that category

China's population — 1.2 billion people — lived in a microregion with living standards exceeding those thresholds. Beyond China, microregions containing 920 million people spread across 75 countries crossed the same threshold.

Similar gains were made at the other end of the spectrum. In 2000, more than one billion people resided in microregions with the lowest standards of living. By 2019, the figure had dropped to just over 400 million people, despite population growth. India in 2000 accounted for 43% of microregions where longevity was less than 65.6 years and income was lower than \$2,400 (the bottom 30% globally); in 2019, it no longer had a single microregion in that category.

Overall, our granular approach shows that living standards declined only rarely, and in places often identifiable only through a microregional lens. Country averages obscure differences in microregional realities: using regression analysis, we found that

a country's growth rate of GDP per capita explains only about 20% of the variation in growth rates in its microregions. In other words, economic progress is primarily explained locally.

For example, in places where a country-level view showed falling GDP per capita, our analysis tells a more nuanced story. A country-level analysis shows that 191 million people living in 20 countries experienced negative income growth from 2000 to 2019. But as we zoom in, we can see exactly where GDP per capita fell: in 6,300 microregions that are home to three times as many people — 574 million — in 100 countries. For 80% of these people, income losses can be explained not by overall economic decline, but rather by rapid population growth.

Then there are the microregions that have made particularly rapid progress. Consider Dibër, a microregion tucked away in the Albanian Alps. Dibër's economy remains highly agrarian, but,

since Albania joined NATO in 2009, the local authorities have been working to revive its once-thriving tourism sector — catering to affluent European travellers visiting the Peshkopi thermal baths — with the help of international agencies.

During the period we studied, the number of health tourists rose steadily as accommodations increased, while glacial lakes and old-growth forests attracted hikers and trekkers. Such developments may have helped to boost health and incomes in Dibër, where GDP per capita more than tripled — from \$3,300 to \$10,200 — between 2000 and 2019, and average life expectancy rose from 74.1 to 78.3 years.

Dibër's experience is representative of a broader trend: income and longevity have grown faster in microregions that started out further behind, narrowing global gaps in health and prosperity. In 2000, the bottom 5% of the world's population lived in microregions where life expectancy was less than 49.7 years, and the top 5% could expect to live over 30 years longer (more than 79.5 years). By 2019, that gap had narrowed to 23 years.

The pandemic interrupted — and even reversed — the progress we examined, but it did not extinguish the potential for further gains. With a more granular understanding of how past progress unfolded — one that informs, for example, how we deploy resources — we can put ourselves on a path toward fulfilling that potential. We may even be able to chart a faster, clearer, and more efficient course.

Chris Bradley is a director of the McKinsey Global Institute. Marc Canal Nogueir is a fellow at the McKinsey Global Institute in Barcelona.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM DEFENCE

Pacifist Japan's big military push



Asad Mirza

THE JAPANESE DECISION MAY LEAD TO AN END TO THE ERA OF NON-ALIGNMENT AND EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH WORLD PEACE SANS ARMAMENTS

After Germany, Japan becomes the second country to overhaul its military in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war and increasing Chinese belligerence. Pacifist Japan has said it would soon start a once-unthinkable \$320 billion military build-up that would arm it with missiles capable of striking China and ready it for a sustained conflict as regional tensions and Russia's Ukraine invasion stoke war fears, globally.

Recently, Japan approved a new national security strategy, one of the country's largest defence shake-ups since World War II. This is a marked shift from the country's pacifist approach, which has dominated its political discourse for decades. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government worries that Russia has set a precedent that will encourage China to attack Taiwan, threatening nearby Japanese islands, disrupting supplies of advanced semiconductors, and putting a potential stranglehold on sea lanes that supply Middle East oil.

The newly released National Security Paper spells out that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a serious violation of laws that forbid the use of force and has shaken the foundations of the international order, and the strategic challenge posed by China is the biggest Japan has ever faced. In its sweeping five-year plan and revamped national security strategy, the Japanese government said on 16

December that it would also stockpile spare parts and other munitions, reinforce logistics, develop cyber-warfare capabilities, and cooperate more closely with the US and other like-minded nations to deter threats to the established international order.

Neighbouring South Korea issued a strong protest against Japan's territorial claim over disputed islands made in a national security paper, while cautiously responding to Tokyo's plans for an unprecedented military build-up. South Korea's foreign ministry has demanded an immediate removal of the territorial claims from Japan's national strategy documents. On his part, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol who took office in May has tried to improve ties with Tokyo, which have been marred by the territorial row over the islands and historic disputes stemming from Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of Korea. However, President Yoon had said in an interview in November that it was understandable for Japan to boost its defence spending given the growing threat from North Korea's ballistic missile programme.

Meanwhile, China has said that hyping up the threat posed by Beijing to back its military build-up "is doomed to fail." Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin has said that Japan's new defence policy ignores facts, deviates from its commitment to

China-Japan relations and the common understandings between the two countries, and groundlessly discredits China's defence building and normal military activities. China resolutely opposes this and has made serious demarches to the Japanese side through diplomatic channels.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has praised Japan's new national security and defence strategies, saying they will also support the US-Japan alliance. Sullivan also praised Kishida's commitment to international peace, nuclear non-proliferation, and his leadership, including support for Ukraine. The reason for the US to welcome the Japanese decision stems from the prism, which it uses to view China. The US sees China as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective." Washington has positioned the next decade — the same period covered by Japan's three new security documents — as a critical period.

Unthinkable under past administrations, the rapid arming of Japan, which already hosts US forces, including a carrier strike group and a Marine expeditionary force, has the backing of most voters, according to opinion polls. Some surveys put support as high as 70% per cent of voters. Kishida's plan will double defence outlays to

about 2% of the GDP over the next five years, and increase the defence ministry's share to about one-tenth of all public spending. It will also make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the US and China, based on current budgets. The five-year spending roadmap did not come with a detailed plan for how Kishida's administration would pay for it, as ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers continue to discuss whether to raise taxes or borrow money.

Japan will acquire new capabilities, such as long-range missiles that can strike enemy missiles on the launchpad, and it will invest in future high-tech capabilities in realms such as cyber and space. In toto, Japan's armed forces will fast become much more formidable in the near future. In fact, Japan becomes the second country after Germany to give up its post-WWII stance on being a military power, in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. But the notable point is that in both cases the US has welcomed the decision of both the governments, as it will translate in big business for its armaments industry.

In reality, the Japanese decision may lead to an end to the era of non-alignment and efforts to establish world peace sans armaments.

The writer is a political consultant and media consultant based in New Delhi.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

Orissa POST

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End plastic menace

Sir, It is an unfortunate fact that plastic waste currently poses a significant threat to the environment all over the world. About 8 million tonne of plastic enters the seas and oceans every year through coastal countries. It is worrisome that every single use of plastic, such as food wrappers and plastic bags, has a user life of a few minutes to a few hours, but as a waste and hazard, they persist for hundreds of years in the environment. Showing dissatisfaction over the plastic waste management policy, the CAG of India asked the Union Environment Ministry to stick to the Plastic Waste Management Policy 2016 vehemently. Plastic waste management is also experiencing operational challenges in Odisha. No doubt, polythene below 50 microns and single use plastic below 200 microns have been banned since 2019 in all ULBs. Yet landfills are filled with plenty of used water bottles, carry bags, milk pouches, and so on. The three Rs—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle—are not being implemented at the appropriate rate. Despite the ban since 2018, the state has not met its goal in terms of plastic waste management. An immediate and serious approach from the urban administration bodies, officials, merchants, and trade unions only can curb the trend and end the plastic menace at this juncture.

Santosh Kumar Satapathy, PARALAKHEMUNDI

Primitive ways

Sir, When the Taliban annexed Afghanistan they had made tall promises — women would be protected from primitive ways was its assurance. But the dispensation has gone back on its promise: it has banned women from pursuing higher education in the country. The outfit has meek reasons for its outrageous decision—to uphold Islamic honour and national interest as it felt the students were increasingly violating the dress code. It is high time the Taliban understood that they are no more a terror outfit, and the fortune of a sensitive nation like Afghanistan lies in their decision making. Time and again it has been proved that when women are provided ample opportunities to excel in education and work, the particular nation has prospered beyond imagination. Moreover, an educated woman is an educated child and, thereby, an educated nation. Leading countries of the world, including India, should keep up the momentum: they should not stop till the Taliban dispensation modifies or reverses its decision.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Trade union leader Dwarika no more



POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 25: Noted trade union leader and former chairman of Odisha State Housing Board, Dwarika Mohan Mishra breathed his last at his Talcher residence Sunday night. He was 88.

Mishra was the founder of Sri Dattatreya Sai Ashram Trust, it was learnt. People from all walks of life condoled Mishra's demise.



CULTURE FEST: Artistes performed at the Gopalpur Beach Festival which kicked off to a grand start, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Woman tortured for dowry; raped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 25: A woman here has accused her in-laws of torturing her over dowry and raping her, police said Sunday. The matter came to light after the survivor lodged a complaint at the Sadar police station here Sunday. Police registered a case and started an investigation. Police also recorded the victim's statement in the court of Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) here.

According to the complaint, the woman got married to Jadukrushna Patra four years back. As part of the dowry, she brought gold ornaments, ₹2 lakh in cash and household articles.

However, her ordeal began after her in-laws started harassing her to bring an additional ₹3,00,000 as dowry. She was tortured by her in-laws when she failed to provide the amount. The woman has alleged that her father-in-law and one brother-in-law have raped her. She stated that they have threatened to make her obscene photos go viral if she speaks about the incidents to anyone. She alleged that her husband's family members have kicked her out of the house.

Left with no option, she visited the Sadar police station and lodged a complaint alleging torture and rape against her in-laws.

DAMAGE TO FOREST COVER AND ENVIRONMENT IN KEONJHAR

Construction of pipeline stopped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec. 25: Acting on a tip-off, Forest department officials here have stopped the laying of slurry pipelines inside Naranpur reserve forest under the Sadar forest range adjoining National Highway-20 in this district following complaints about large-scale irregularities in the work. It has been alleged that the work was damaging forest cover and also affecting the elephant corridor in the locality.

Sources said Sunday that the agency entrusted with the laying of the pipelines has illegally cut a large number of sal and other varieties of trees with machines. They were then burying those trees to cover the damage. Environmentalists have pointed out that mindless destruction of trees will also affect the growth of other foliage. Sources said that a group of lawyers are preparing to file a petition in this regard before the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

After receiving complaints, a team of Forest department officials rushed to the spot and stopped work. They are also probing into the allegations of destruction of trees.



Sources said that pipelines are being laid by industrial plants for transportation of iron ore from Barbil to Paradip port. Earlier, the Forest department had earmarked the land on which trees could be cut. But the construction agency entrusted with the work is not following the guidelines, it has been alleged.

Environmentalist Pradip Mohanty, alleged that the dispute came to light after the construction agency chopped down many large trees without obtaining any prior sanction.

The Forest department had also put up a plaque warning people about elephant movement in the area. It had also constructed a

cabin to track the movement of the animals. Elephants often cross the highway to move from one side of the forest to the other. The mindless felling of trees is also threatening the existence of animals like elephants, bears, wild boars, porcupines and deer. With the forest cover off, these animals now are at the mercy of poachers.

The agency had been asked to build the pipelines within a specific distance from the highway. After receiving clearance from the Forest department to cut some trees, the agency began laying the pipelines. However, from the very beginning, it started violating rules, sources said. They added that many valuable trees have been unnecessarily been cut. They also pointed out that in the haste to build the pipeline the agency has damaged other vital constructions. Among the installations damaged are drinking water pipelines.

When contacted, Sadar forest ranger Bijay Kumar Mohanta said that he asked a team to visit the spot where the pipeline was being illegally laid and stop work immediately. He assured that action will be taken if the agency is found to have committed any irregularities.

Rehab of surrendered ultras, backers opposed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 25: People of Siadimal in Chalanguda panchayat in Malkangiri district have opposed rehabilitation and resettlement of Maoists who have surrendered and their supporters on a government land near their village. They have submitted a memorandum to the collector in this regard. "We knew that surrendered Maoists and their sympathisers will be settled on a land near our village. We oppose it," they said.

Massive scams scuttle MGNREGS in Jajpur dist



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 25: During Covid-19 and post the pandemic, both the Central and state governments have emphasised proper execution of projects under MGNREGS to ensure scope of work to job card holders and rural people. However, large-scale irregularities have scuttled the objective of the rural job scheme in Jajpur district, sources said Sunday.

It has been alleged that administrative lethargy and the inability to act against corruption has encouraged scams in MGNREGS in many panchayats under Rasulpur block and other areas in Jajpur district. In some cases, machines were used in projects instead of manual labour while fake attendance registers of local labourers were prepared to embezzle funds worth lakhs of rupees.

Though locals have apprised the district collector regarding the situation, no action has been taken against the guilty, it was alleged.

Sources informed that 65 per cent of MGNREGS funds are being spent for construction and allied sectors while remaining 35% are used on projects utilising natural resources in this district.

MGNREGS guidelines say, minimum 60 per cent of the funds will be used for paying wages. However, in this district, more than 50% of the funds are being used to hire machines, sources pointed out. They added that the remaining amount is usually shown as salaries paid

to fictitious workers.

An example will highlight the irregularities that are plaguing MGNREGS. Since 2019-20 till date, massive funds have been misappropriated in Vikipur panchayat while work was done even on pastureland, which is against the MGNREGS guidelines. Many such irregularities have been committed in Laxminagar panchayat during the Covid-19 outbreak. But no investigation has been carried out against the embezzlement, sources said. In Vikipur, lakhs of rupees have been looted through plantation projects. It was learnt that over ₹4.93 lakh was sanctioned in 2019-20 for plantation on Matha ground. Only a few names of local workers were enrolled for the project.

Besides, huge amounts were sanctioned for projects like Vikipur-Jokadia road, Vikipur-Krushnanagar road, land upgrading near Hingula temple, modernisation of a playground and pond renovation of Hingula temple. Sources said that many influential people are involved in the scams. However, as they wield power, locals do not openly speak out against them.

Local resident Chandrasekhar Padhi and co-villagers of Vikipur had drawn attention of the District Collector Chakravarti Singh Rathore towards the massive irregularities in MGNREGS projects. However, the scams continue. When contacted, project director of DRDA, Ashok Kumar Behura said that he has not received any complaints about the alleged irregularities.

Sand, tomato Santa attracts huge crowds

PNN & AGENCIES

Gopalpur, Dec 25: A giant 27-foot sand and tomato Santa Claus installation crafted by well-known sculptor Sudarsan Pattnaik rang in the Christmas cheer in Odisha Sunday, as revellers flocked to the Gopalpur beach to get a glimpse of the artwork. Sudarsan claimed his creation is the world's biggest tomato and sand installation of Santa Claus, which weighs 1.5 tonne and is 60-feet wide.

The Padma Shri awardee said, "We have set records earlier; too, during Christmas by creating the biggest Santa Claus using different mediums. This time, we have used sand and tomato."

The internationally acclaimed artist has been making sand sculptures based on a variety of themes over the years. Sudarsan had created the logo of India's G20 presidency on sand, after India officially took over the chair of the grouping in November.

Youth gets 4-year RI, fined ₹1 lakh for rape

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Dec 25: A fast track POCSO court here sentenced a youth to four years of rigorous imprisonment after convicting him of raping a minor in 2018.

The convict was identified as Manu Pataguru, 29, a resident of Kotagarh police limits in Kandhamal district.

Judge Bhaskar Chandra Sahu also slapped a penalty of ₹1 lakh on the convict. In default, the convict has to undergo an additional three months of imprisonment, the court said. The girl was on way to relieve herself September 21, 2018 when Manu forced her into a nullah and raped her.



FUN AND FROLIC: Tourists frolicking at Digha beach bordering Bhograi in Balasore district on the occasion of Christmas, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Mushroom farming changes man's life in Kalahandi dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koksara, Dec 25: A saying goes - will power, self confidence and hard work will ultimately pay off. Romanchal Pujari, 45, of Koksara block in Kalahandi district has proved this saying by becoming a successful mushroom farmer. While scores of youths look for jobs, Romanchal has made mushroom farming a successful business venture, though in a small manner.

Romanchal, a native of Bangemunda village under Gambahriguda panchayat, has been farming mushrooms for the last eight years and eking out a

living. The idea of earning from mushroom farming struck him in 2013 and he received training for it from Ouat in Bhubaneswar.

After returning to his village, Romanchal started mushroom farming. He was helped by his wife Kamalini (40) and younger daughter Minati (22). He is now earning enough to pay for the education expenses of his elder daughter Rekha (24) who is studying Plus-II in a government college in Bhawanipatana, his younger daughter and two sons.

"At least 20kg to 30kg of mushrooms are produced in my farm. Importantly, I needn't go anywhere



Before he took up mushroom farming, life was tedious for Romanchal as he did not have a sustained source of income. However, now he ekes out a comfortable living and provides his kids with proper education

to sell it. Traders from various parts of Odisha come to buy mushroom from my doorsteps. A kilo-

gram of mushroom is sold for ₹160," Romanchal informed.

Romanchal said that before taking up mushroom farming, he was going through a lot of difficulties and was leading a miserable life as he did not have a proper job. Many people in his locality have migrated to other states for work, but he wanted to stay back in the village. And mushroom farming turned out to be the most viable option.

Romanchal lamented that he has not yet received any support from the government. He stated that if he gets some financial help, he can increase his business manifold.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I Miss Tannistha Maharana, D/o. Ashok Kumar Maharana & Kalpana Moharana of Hal Township, Sunabeda, Dist-Koraput (Odisha), do hereby declare that by virtue of affidavit dated 24.12.2022, before the Notary Public, Sunabeda that my mother Kalpana Moharana and Kalpana Maharana both are same and one only.

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Good, Bad & Ugly

2022 was an eventful year for many reasons. While some celebs shone on global forums for their individual brilliance, there are a few who remained in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons...

Boycott calls
Laal Singh Chaddha
Brahmastra
Raksha Bandhan
Pathaan

HOLLYWOOD ROUNDUP
CODA
THE POWER OF THE DOG & DUNE

IMMORTAL ICONS

Lata Mangeshkar
Pandit Birju Maharaj
Bappi Lahiri
Raju Srivastava
KK
Prafulla Kar
Pandit Umesh Chandra Kar
Saroj Patnaik
Jharana Das
Mihir Das
Raimohan Parida



GLOBAL GLORIES

Moving to next level
ALIA BHATT: The Razi actor will be making her Hollywood debut...
DHANUSH: The son-in-law of Superstar Rajinikanth...
RICHIA CHADHA: Name of this Indian actress...
SAMANATHA RUTH PRABHU: Samantha will debut in Hollywood...
JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ: Even as the actress was in the news...

ADIEU GODARD
Prakruti & Babushaan

Mudslinging
Barsha & Anubhav
The couple, who has been fighting a legal battle over a marital dispute...

Ollywood: Happy days're here again
CODA, THE POWER OF THE DOG & DUNE SWEEP AWARD SHOWS
From actor Will Smith slapping Chris Rock at Academy awards to live trial of Johnny Depp and Amber Heard case...

WALKED DOWN THE AISLE

Ranbir & Alia
Ali Faizal & Richa Chadha
Riya Dey & Sunil Dalai
Prenna & Ashwin
Nayanthara & Vignesh Sivan
Mouni Roy & Suraj Nambiar

SPLIT-UPS

Susmita Sen & Rohman Shawl
Harry Styles & Olivia Wilde
Kim Kardarshian & Pete Davidson
Sohail Khan & Seema Sajdeh

UPCOMING STAR KIDS

AGASTYA NANDA
PALAK TIWARI
KHUSHI KAPOOR
SUHANA KHAN
SHANAYA KAPOOR

DISASTERS

JERSEY
SHAMSHERA
SAMRAT PRITHVIRAJ
BACHCHHAN PAANDEY
JAYESHBHAI JORDAAR

HIGHEST GROSSERS

Hollywood
Top Gun Maverick
Jurassic World: Dominion
Doctor Strange
Minions: The Rise of Gru
Black Panther

REKINDLED LOVE

Depp-Heard trial
The jury, in Johnny Depp v Amber Heard case, ruled that Heard's op-ed references to sexual violence and domestic abuse were false and defamed Depp...

Upcoming star kids
The Hindi film industry has always been welcoming to the star kids and their debuts are keenly awaited...

AGASTYA NANDA
PALAK TIWARI
KHUSHI KAPOOR
SUHANA KHAN
SHANAYA KAPOOR

DISASTERS
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SHAMSHERA
SAMRAT PRITHVIRAJ
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Risk of data tampering in Assam's NRC updation process: CAG report

The CAG maintained that the objective of preparing a valid error-free NRC has not been met despite entailing huge expenditure to the state exchequer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 25: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has flagged the "risk of data tampering" in the NRC for Assam, due to "improper" software development related to data capture and correction during the updation process of the citizenship document.

A highly secure and reliable software was required to be developed for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) updation exercise, but during the audit, "lack of proper planning in this regard" came to the fore. The updated final NRC, which validates bonafide Indian citizens of Assam, was released August 31, 2019, with total 3,11,21,004 names included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants, though it is yet to be notified.

The CAG submitted a report for the year ended in 2020, on the last day of the winter session of the Assam Assembly Saturday, which pointed out that 215 software utilities were added in a "haphazard manner" to the core software. It was done "without following the due process of either software development or selection of vendor through eligibility assessment following a national tendering," the report said.

"Haphazard development of software and utilities for NRC data capture and correction posed the risk of data tampering, without leaving any audit trail. The audit trail could have ensured accountability for the veracity of NRC data," the CAG report said. It maintained that the objective of preparing a valid error-free NRC has not been met despite entailing huge expenditure to the state exchequer.

According to the report, there have been irregularities in the utilisation of funds, including excess and inadmissible payment to vendors.

The CAG report on compliance audit of 'logistical arrangements for NRC updation project in Assam', recommended fixing responsibility on erring authorities for the financial irregularities and penal action against M/s Wipro Limited, the system integrator, for violating Minimum Wages Act.

The NRC was updated in Assam under the supervision of a Supreme Court bench. The CAG report maintained that the objective of preparing a valid error-free NRC has not been met despite entailing huge expenditure to the state exchequer.

It noted that the initial project cost was estimated at Rs 288.18 crore when the NRC updation process had commenced in December 2014 and the deadline for completion was set for February 2015.

The final draft of the document was, however, published in August 2019 and the project cost escalated to Rs 1,602.66 crore (expenditure of Rs 1,579.78 crore was reported),



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the CAG report said. It said that test check of records by audit has revealed "various irregularities in the utilisation of fund including excess and inadmissible payment to vendors".

The report has recommended fixing of responsibility and action against the State Coordinator of National Registration (SCNR) for the excess, irregular and inadmissible payments.

The commissioner and secretary, political department, government of Assam, was designated as the SCNR to carry out the NRC updation exercise.

Mentioning non-adherence to Minimum Wages Act in payment to operators by M/s Wipro Limited as revealed during its audit, the CAG recommended penal action against the system integrator.

"Accountability of the SCNR, as principal employer, should also be fixed for not ensuring compliance with the MW Act," the report added.

Assam, which had faced influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC which was first prepared in 1951.

Kolkata set to beat Delhi's pollution record

Not a single power plant in Bengal has successfully implemented the emission standards set for them in December 2015

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 25: A new year always brings with it a new hope for brighter days and this time, the expectations are even higher given that things, especially the economic activities, have started to pick up after a prolonged slow-down due to the pandemic. However, on the environment front, environmentalists have forecast a grim scenario as they see 2023 approaching with a serious threat for West Bengal. As per them, the pollution levels in Kolkata and some other towns might reach worsening levels with the likelihood of average air quality index (AQI) in the state capital surpassing that of New Delhi.

Sounds unconceivable! But indications have been there with the advent of winter in the last month of 2022, where the AQI for Kolkata has been recorded worse than that of New Delhi on certain days.

According to a recent report from HEI Soga, currently Kolkata is the second most polluted city in the world next only to New Delhi in the parameter of the quantity of PM2.5 and nitrogen dioxide in the air. However, in the last month of 2022, there has been an indication that one day the pollution level in Kolkata is going above that of the national capital. For two consecutive days of December 12 and December 13, the pollution level in Kolkata had been higher than Delhi as far as the AQI parameter is concerned. On both these days, the AQI levels were above 300 which falls under 'hazardous' category, as against Delhi's levels of 'very unhealthy' December 12 and 'unhealthy' December 13.

According to environmentalist and green-technologist Somendra Mohan Ghosh, this finding is an alarming indication. "This shows that while at times the AQI levels in the national capital have started showing some minor positive trends, the



situation is getting reversed. If administrative measures for pollution control are not implemented strictly, things will worsen for Kolkata as well as in the entire state in the coming years and if not the next year," Ghosh said.

Environmental activists are of the opinion that a number of negative factors in the pollution-management system are fuelling the fast deterioration on this count. Of these negative factors some are typical for Kolkata while some relate to the districts of West Bengal. The most glaring example has been evident in the case of coal-based thermal power plants in Bengal, which have conventionally contributed to increasing pollution levels in the state.

According to a recent report from Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), not a single power plant in Bengal has successfully implemented the emission standards set for them in December 2015. CREA analyst Sunil Dahiya feels that this a serious lapse on part of both public and private sector thermal

For two consecutive days of December 12 and December 13, the pollution level in Kolkata had been higher than Delhi as far as the AQI parameter is concerned

power plants in the state.

Renowned environment activists like Subhash Dutta and Nabu Dutta feel that there is an urgent necessity for the Bengal government to replicate the Tamil Nadu model of setting up a special-purpose vehicle like Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC) to formulate plans to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state besides developing strategies to reduce emissions through green energy and renewable energy and increasing forest cover among others.

Environmentalists like Dipanjali Majumdar and Viay Jaju feel that while automobile emission remains the dominant

factor for the deteriorating AQI in Kolkata, there are other factors like open air cooking using coal-based or kerosene-gas ovens by 10,000-odd street vendors in the city, indiscriminate burning of garbage in open places in absence of a proper garbage segregation system and the piling of hazardous construction sites in open spaces near under-construction real estate sites.

Considering that automobile emissions remain the dominant factor for the deteriorating AQI, Ghosh especially stressed on limiting the entry of diesel-driven commercial vehicles within the city limits. "In order to achieve that the state government will have to take initiatives like setting up more CNG stations and charging centres for battery-operated vehicles. At the same time, an initiative should be taken for direct supply of CNG through pipelines to different gas stations. Another necessity is setting up adequate conversion centres for conversion to fit the CNG kits into the existing diesel operated vehicles," Ghosh added.

Assam govt decides to quash EWS quota on jobs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 25: The BJP-led government in Assam has decided to do away with the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota on jobs but the reservation under EWS would continue for admissions in educational institutions, officials said.

Opposition parties including Congress strongly criticised the Assam government for its decision on EWS quota on government jobs.

An official notification of the Department of Personnel said: "Governor of Assam is pleased to keep the matter of reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in direct recruitment in posts and services under Government of Assam in abeyance until further order: Provided that this shall not be applicable in those cases in which the vacancies have already been assessed and have already been advertised."

It said: "However, the reservation for the Economically Weaker Section category as provided will continue for admissions in Educational Institutions."

Opposition Congress, Trinamool Congress, the All India United Democratic Front and other parties have strongly condemned the Assam's BJP government decision not to implement the EWS quota on jobs.

Leader of the Opposition (Congress), Debabrata Saikia criticised the state government's decision, terming it a cost-cutting measure because of a financial crisis brought upon by extravagant expenditure on several projects and schemes.

LEGAL BATTLES OR ON-FIELD ACTION?

Bengal Oppn mulls ways to stump Trinamool

The presence of CPI-M cadres in demonstrations on issues like corruption against the ruling Trinamool has largely overshadowed similar initiatives on this count by the BJP, whose leaders are more focussed on court battles to counter the ruling party

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



Kolkata, Dec 25: The political scene in West Bengal is likely to witness several interesting turns in the new year against the backdrop of two consecutive elections in the next two years - the first being the panchayat polls next year and the second being the Lok Sabha polls in 2024.

The results of the rural civic body polls in West Bengal have always been an indicator for the Lok Sabha polls since 2008. The results of the panchayat polls in 2008 witnessed the first signs of cracks in the CPI-M's solid red fort which was the first sign of change in the power equations in the state.

These cracks resulted in a major collapse in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections with the Congress-Trinamool Congress alliance stumping the mighty CPI-M-led Left Front in terms

of number of seats. This finally resulted in the total collapse the 34-year Left Front regime in West Bengal in the 2011 Assembly polls.

Again, in 2018 panchayat polls, the results showed the BJP emerging as the most formidable opposition in West Bengal, with the Left Front in a distant third position.

The trend gained momentum in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections with the BJP improving its seat tally to 18 from just two in 2014, while the Left Front got reduced to zero from two in 2014.

But will the BJP be able to retain its principal opposition status or will the rural civic body polls witness a resurrection of the red force?

The question has gained significance because despite being reduced to zero in terms of the number of seats in the 2021 Assembly

polls, the Bengal leftists have been able to substantially improve their vote share in different bypolls and elections for municipalities and municipal corporations in the last one year.

The presence of CPI-M cadres in demonstrations on issues like corruption against the ruling Trinamool has largely overshadowed similar initiatives on this count by the BJP, whose leaders are more focussed on court battles to counter the ruling party. It remains to be seen whether legal battles or the on-field resistance will be the opposition strategy to take on the Trinamool.

As far as the BJP is concerned, their strategic moves for the rural civic body polls makes it clear that dependence on court battles will get a greater focus in the coming days.

Besides forming a committee for the panchayat polls under the leadership of party Lok Sabha member from Raiganj, Debasree Chaudhuri, a separate committee has been formed to look after the legal affairs and social media campaign for the panchayat polls. Legal brains dominate the committee with the leading face being the convener of the party's legal cell in West Bengal, Loknath Chattopadhyay. According to him, when the democratic system in the state collapses, then the courts remain the only recourse for the opposition parties to seek justice, since only the judicial system can order remedial measures to protect democracy against the atrocities of the ruling party.

However, state president of the CPI-M's youth wing, Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), Meenakshi Mukherjee, who is one of the leading faces of the party's protest demonstrations over various issues, feels that the resistance against the ruling party goons will have to be organised through on-field resistance by uniting the people.

Political analysts too feel that any movement by the opposition should have a perfect balance of on-field resistance and legal discourse to take that movement to the highest level.

"History has proved it again and again that the balance of these two factors has been the most effective tool for the opposition," feels political observer Raja Gopal Dhar Chakraborty.

Himanta polarises Assam's politics

Although Assam does not have any major elections slated for next year, the political environment is hot with Sarma at the centre

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 25: Politics in Assam in the year ahead seems to be moving along the polarising highway, political pundits in the state point out. With Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma batting for the Uniform Civil Code and speaking up on love jihad and other polarising issues, understanding the signals do not require a high level of political acumen.

Although Assam does not have any major elections slated for next year, the political environment is hot with Sarma at the centre.

Three northeastern states -- Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland -- will go to the polls in early 2023.

that he will not seek Muslim votes because they will not vote for the BJP anyway. A clever politician like Himanta Biswa Sarma knows perfectly well that his provocative statements against the Muslim community will consolidate the Hindu vote bank. He will cultivate this further over the next year, and it may reach its peak before the Lok Sabha elections.

When in the Congress, Sarma was known for his liberal image. He enjoyed quite a good following among Muslim voters. Though he started his career with the All Assam Students Union (AASU), Sarma was never seen as an Assamese hardliner. Rather, he was known to be soft towards the Bengali



However, Assam will remain the epicentre of these state elections as Sarma, chairman of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), will be the primary pulling force for the BJP's election machinery in these states. Meanwhile, Sarma is also eyeing to win at least 22 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats in the N-E 2024. Assam has 14 LS seats, and in the last parliamentary election, the BJP won nine seats. This time the party leaders have set a target to win at least 12 seats, leaving one or two seats that have a large number of Muslim voters.

Sarma has formulated a strategy to achieve his target, which he tried and tested in the 2021 state election. He relies on the polarisation of votes. Assam has approximately 30% Muslim voters. The Chief Minister has stated unequivocally

speaking community in Assam, which constitutes nearly one third of the population of the state.

Interestingly, in the run-up to the 2016 assembly elections in the state, Sarma garnered an image as a hard-core Assamese leader. He openly advocated for 1951 as the base year for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, which was a long pending demand from AASU and other organisations. Sarma changed his position after the BJP swept to power in Assam. He began to present himself as a Hindu hardliner.

On the other hand, opposition unity is at stake in Assam. After breaking away from the grand alliance, the Congress and the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) are locked in a tussle.

WB Guv talks to Left students after facing protests at JU

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 25: West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose faced protests by Left students of Jadavpur University, of which he is the chancellor, Saturday when he went to attend the convocation but he pacified the agitators by speaking to them.

As Bose's car went near the convocation venue, SFI and Faculty of Engineering and Technology Students' Union (FETSU) members of the university waved placards and raised slogans demanding an early students' union election,

which is overdue for over three years.

Bose went inside the marquee set up for the programme and took his chair on the podium as sloganeering continued outside.

But he soon sent word to the agitating students that he would like to meet them. A delegation of SFI and FETSU were then closeted with the governor.

FETSU president Aritra Majumder later said, "We have nothing against the Governor. We only wanted to convey our long-standing demand to hold students' union polls which the JU author-



ities are delaying for no reason.

We tried to intimate him about

our democratic rights not being granted and he seemed to be sympathetic to our issue."

Majumder said Bose invited the students to the Raj Bhavan to discuss their demands in future if they are dissatisfied. The Governor also told them that he had taken over recently and is yet to get the full grasp of their problems.

"Let me know things first. I will certainly look into it," an SFI leader said quoting Bose.

The Governor told reporters, "If there is a problem there can be ways to solve it. We will find the ways."

of the day quote

The country developed in every field from nuclear power to infrastructure development and telecom revolution, administrative reforms to rural development due to Atal ji's vision and decisive leadership

The opposition parties have no love left for Vidarbha as they are not taking up issues of the region during the ongoing state legislature session in the region's Nagpur city

When done with force, everything is bad. And changing one's religion with bad intention and forcing someone to change his religion, both are wrong. Hence, it is necessary to see and understand this issue in the right perspective. The fundamentalist politics which is being done over this issue will only harm the country

SHORT TAKES

Cops slap Sec 144 in Mangaluru

Mangaluru: A 45-year old man was allegedly stabbed to death at Katipalla in Surathkal police station limits here Saturday night, police said. The deceased has been identified as Jaleel, owner of a fancy shop. Jaleel was at his shop, when two persons allegedly attacked him. He was rushed to a hospital nearby, where he succumbed to injuries. Police Commissioner N Shashi Kumar Sunday clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Cr.P.C in Surathkal and adjoining areas.

Armed forces to buy Pralay missiles

New Delhi: The Defence Ministry has given the nod to procure 120 Pralay ballistic missiles for the armed forces that are likely to be deployed along India's border areas along Pakistan and China. The DRDO had last year in December successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the indigenously developed surface-to-surface Pralay missile. Pralay is capable of striking and destroying targets in the range of 150-500 km, and can also be used in the night to attack enemy's targets.

Reddy floats new party

Bangalore: Former Karnataka Minister and mining baron G Janardhana Reddy on Sunday announced a new party named "Kalyana Rajya Pragati Paksha", four months ahead of Assembly polls in the state. With this, the leader, who is an accused in an illegal mining case, has cut his two-decade-old association with the BJP. Re-entering Karnataka's electoral politics from outside his home district of Ballari, he also announced that he will contest the 2023 Assembly polls from Gangavathi in Koppal district.

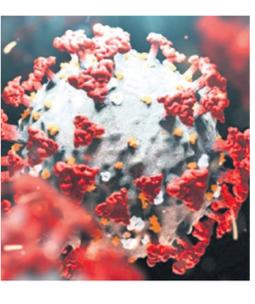
South Korean man dies

Mehsana: A South Korean man died after falling 50 feet to the ground while paragliding in Gujarat's Mehsana district, police said Sunday. The accident took place at around 5.30 pm on Saturday at a school ground in Visatpura village near Kadi town of the district. Shin Byeong Moon was killed after the canopy of his paraglider failed to open properly, because of which he lost balance and fell from a height of about 50 feet, inspector Nikunj Patel of Kadi police station said.

BF.7 variant may not be as serious as in China: CCMB chief

Hyderabad, Dec 25: The severity of BF.7 variant of coronavirus in India may not be as serious as it is currently prevailing in China as Indian have already developed "herd immunity" a top official of CSIR- Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) here said. Vinay K Nandicoori, Director CCMB, stressing the need to follow Covid appropriate behaviour, said

there is always a concern that all these variants have the ability to escape the immunity and can infect people who are vaccinated and even sometimes infected with the previous variants of Omicron. "The severity of the infection is not as much as they used to be with Delta. That's because of the fact that we do have herd immunity to an extent. Actually we have herd immunity because we are exposed to the other viruses," he said. Media reports indicate that India



reported four cases of BF.7 variant of coronavirus. "We (India) have seen the Delta wave which is a big one. Then we have got vaccination done. And then the Omicron wave came and we continued booster doses. We are different in many ways. What is happening in China may not happen in India because of that," he further said. India reported 201 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases increased to 3,397, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

The official said the "Zero Covid Policy" followed by China is one of the reasons for the outbreak of the infection in that country and opined that lower vaccination levels may also have contributed to the severity. "It is actually that (the zero Covid policy that China is followed) and also the fact is in China, not many people really went for the vaccine as it has happened in India all the older population is vaccinated and some-

times even booster dose has been given to them or to the susceptible sections," he said. Maintaining that at this point it cannot be asserted that there may or may not be a wave in India, Nandicoori said as of now it does not seem to be that alarming that a wave is coming right away. Currently there is enough capacity within India both for the Covid tests as well as therapy and vaccination. They are accessible to many people, he added.

'War-like stores', arms found near LoC

Srinagar, Dec 25: A huge cache of arms and ammunition and 'war-like stores', including AK-74 rifles, Pakistani-origin hand grenades and balloons with 'I Love Pakistan' markings, were recovered along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri Sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, an Army officer said Friday.



Friday, a search operation was launched in the general area of Hathlanga Nala which lasted for eight hours and concluded with the recovery of arms, ammunition and 'war-like stores'

The recoveries were made at a time when there is huge desperation on the Pakistani side to either infiltrate terrorists or smuggle war-like stores into Kashmir as the number of ultras and arms and ammunition was at an all-time low in the Valley, he said.

ducted along the LoC. On Friday, a search operation was launched in the general area of Hathlanga Nala which lasted for eight hours and concluded with the recovery of arms, ammunition and war-like stores, he said.

Pakistan" marking on them, and five synthetic gunny nags with Pakistani marking, the Army officer said.

riorists or smugglers to get war-like stores cannot be said, Major Gen Chandpuria said, referring to the recovery of the weapons.

Giving details, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Army's 19 Infantry Division Major General Ajay Chandpuria said based on intelligence inputs received from multiple intelligence agencies over a period of two weeks about infiltration attempts and dumping of war-like stores by terrorists in the Hathlanga area of Rampur Sector in Uri, multiple ambushes and search operations were con-

The situation is near normal in Kashmir valley as the number of terrorists and the availability of war-like stores is at an all-time low. So, there is huge desperation from the other side to either infiltrate terrorists or smuggle war-like stores," he told reporters in Baramulla.

Security forces keep getting such reports on a regular basis and whether it was an attempt by ter-

leads and certain details cannot be shared, but a movement close to the launchpads was picked up. Probably, they (terrorists) panicked and left the war-like stores behind and withdrew to that side," he said. Maj Gen Chandpuria said there have been attempts on the border not only of infiltration but also of smuggling war-like stores and drugs in the past as well.

China returnee found Covid positive in Agra

Agra (UP), Dec 25: A 40-year-old man, who returned from China two days back, has tested positive for COVID-19 following which he has been isolated at his home here, Chief Medical Officer Arun Srivastava said Sunday.

test would be made mandatory for passengers from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand and asked states to conduct a mock drill on December 27 to ensure readiness of health facilities including medical oxygen generation plants.

His samples will be sent to Lucknow for genome sequencing, he said. "The man has been isolated at his home and teams of the health department have been asked to conduct tests of his family members and those who came in contact with him," Srivastava added.

Meanwhile, the health department in Agra began screening and collecting samples of foreign tourists at Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Akbar's Tomb here. Besides, samples are also being collected at the Agra airport, railway station and Inter Bus Terminal (ISBT), officials said.

The man returned to Agra from China via Delhi on December 23 following which he was tested at a private lab. The report came out positive for Covid, he added. This is the first Covid positive case in the district detected after November 25, officials said. Amid a surge in Covid cases in some countries, including China, the Centre has ramped up its anti-coronavirus measures. The Centre had said RT-PCR

"Sample collection at Sarojani Naidu Medical College, District Hospital and Primary and Community Health Centres in rural Agra have been initiated with priority. Those who have symptoms of cold, cough and fever can visit the health centres to undergo Covid test," CMO added. Srivastava added, "Residents are being asked to wear masks and maintain social distance at public places."

Sacked, man kills boss, his father and uncle

Surat, Dec 25: A man and his associate allegedly stabbed to death the owner of an embroidery firm in Gujarat's Surat, his father and uncle Sunday apparently as he was angry with his former employer for removing him from job recently, police said.

Rewa man brutally thrashes girlfriend

In a video of the incident, the woman is seen asking the accused to marry her. The man initially gets irritated and then proceeds to kick and slap her repeatedly in the face and keeps attacking the victim even after she faints

also been suspended for dereliction of duty, he said. The accused, who is employed as a driver, was arrested from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh Saturday night, Superintendent of Police (SP) Navneet Bhasin said. The 19-year-old victim was admitted to a hospital in a critical condition and she is undergoing treatment, he said.



Tourists in large numbers visit Taj Mahal on Christmas in Agra

The triple murder took place at the victim's company, Vedant Texo, located in Anjani industrial area of Amroli area of Surat city, they said. The Surat Police detained the two accused and formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case, a senior official said.

"The accused and his associate walked into the company on Sunday morning and stabbed the owner of the unit, his father and uncle to death," Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) (Zone 5) Harshad Mehta said. Both the accused have been detained and are being questioned, he said.

In-charge of Mauganj police station Shweta Maurya has been suspended for dereliction of duty, and the authorities have also demolished the house of the accused in Dhera village under Mauganj police station, the official said.

Tunisha's death: Co-actor arrested

Palghar, Dec 25: Police Sunday arrested a 27-year old co-actor of television and film actress Tunisha Sharma on the charge of abetting her suicide in Maharashtra's Palghar district, an official said.



Khan was later produced before a Vasai magistrate who remanded him in police custody for four days, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Tulin) Chandrakant Jadhav said. The police officer further said the postmortem report of Sharma stated she died of hanging.

The victim had come to the police station to inform about the incident, but she refused to lodge a complaint. The accused was detained under section 151 (disturbing public peace) of the IPC and later released, an official had said earlier.

The 21-year-old actress allegedly committed suicide on the set of a serial in Vasai area here on Saturday, he said. Based on a complaint filed by Sharma's mother, the Valiv police here registered a case against the deceased's co-actor,

Sharma had acted in the TV show 'Bharat Ka Veer Putra - Maharana Pratap' and films like 'Fitor' and 'Baar Baar Dekho'. The incident took place on a set where the shooting of the serial 'Ali Baba: Dastaan-E-Kabul' was in progress.



ED's dismal record The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has taken up investigation in around 87 cases under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) against MPs, MLAs and MLCs (both-ex and sitting). During the last five years, 59 Prosecution Complaints have been filed before the Special Court (PMLA) which

are at various stages of trial. Interestingly, since July 1, 2005 when the PMLA came into force, the trial has been completed only in 36 cases by the Special Court till date. The trial of the offence of money laundering has been completed only in 21 cases on merit out of 36 decided cases which resulted in conviction of 31 accused in 20 cases.

figure of 156. Not many outside Gujarat understood the importance of the man who played a key role in planning the BJP's historic win. When CR Patil was first appointed as Gujarat BJP chief in July 2020, eyebrows were raised as to why Modi picked a person who hailed from Maharashtra. But those close to Modi knew that Patil is a silent warrior. He was in charge of Modi's Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency in 2014 and in 2019 LS polls as well. When Patil was given the Gujarat responsibility, he wanted to set the target of winning all 182 seats. His argument was that if the BJP can win all 26 Lok Sabha seats from the state, why can't the party win all 182 seats. But this catchy slogan was dropped after deliberations and BJP kept talking about crossing the 149 seats mark won by Madhav Sinh Solanki. It transpires that Modi gave Patil a free hand to select candidates and evolve a new strategy. Patil introduced

new strategies at booth and even street level in every village.

face to overcome anti-incumbency against him.

Emergence of a new star

The BJP has seen the emergence of a new star on the horizon in the Gujarat Assembly elections. The BJP win in the state was a foregone conclusion and it was widely believed that Modi-Shah team will cross the 130 seats mark in a house of 182. But the outcome shocked all pollsters as the BJP touched an unprecedented

Why Chouhan should be worried

The big Gujarat win notwithstanding, it's the defeat in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi MCD polls that has made the BJP leadership worried. The heads have started rolling in the BJP after defeat in the two states. The defeat of BJP in Himachal does not augur well for Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Reports emanating from BJP headquarters suggest that had the party sacked Jai Ram Thakur along with some of the ministers, the result could have been different. Such an experiment paid rich dividends including Gujarat. The BJP leadership has been toying with the idea of removing Chouhan and bringing a new

Vasundhara is sitting pretty

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia has reasons to be happy with the outcome of Himachal polls. It is for the first time the BJP leadership faced a major rebellion in a state and ensured the party's defeat. The BJP leadership is keen to anoint Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Shekhawat as Chief Minister and not Scindia in Rajasthan in the event of the party winning the polls. But Himachal's defeat has made the leadership worried about the rebel factor in the desert state. In Himachal, the PM went to the extent of personally ringing up a rebel to make him withdraw. But he declined and went on to even leak the conversation as well.

international



We endured at the beginning of the war - we withstood attacks, threats, nuclear blackmail, terror, missile strikes. We will endure this winter because we know what we are fighting for
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | UKRAINE, PRESIDENT

XMAS EVE SHOOTING AT UK PUB

A Christmas Eve shooting at a pub in northwest England killed a young woman and wounded three men, police said Sunday. The Merseyside Police force said it was investigating the 11:50 pm on Saturday shooting at the Lighthouse pub in the town of Wallasey as a murder case. Police have not detained any suspects



of the day quote

With regard to the Ukraine crisis, we have consistently upheld the fundamental principles of objectivity and impartiality, without favouring one side or the other, or adding fuel to the fire, still less seeking selfish gains from the situation

WANG YI | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER

Some people tried their best to block the AL from coming to power. But I will not hand over Bangladesh to any conspirator

SHEIKH HASINA | BANGLADESH PM

We're preparing to build an advanced natural gas marketplace where multiple products, multiple contracts come together to form reference prices

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT OF TURKEY

SHORT TAKES

King Charles delivers first Xmas speech

London: King Charles III is hosting his first traditional family Christmas as monarch Sunday at the Sandringham royal estate in Norfolk for the first time. It also marks the first time since before the pandemic in 2019 that Britain's royal family spent Christmas at eastern England estate and the royal standard flag is once again flying above the house marking a return of the long-standing festive tradition.

Heavy rains expected in SL

Colombo: Sri Lanka's Department of Meteorology Sunday said that they expect heavy showers in many parts of the country within next 48 hours. This is caused by a depression over southwest Bay of Bengal, which is moving across the country, the department said, adding that strong winds can also be expected at times over the country.

Six dead after bus plunges off bridge

Madrid: Six people died and two were injured after a passenger bus careened off a bridge and plunged into an overflowing river in northwestern Spain. Two survivors - the vehicle's 63-year-old driver and a female passenger - were pulled out of the river.

SA counts death by tanker blast

Johannesburg: South Africa was coming to grips Sunday with the full extent of the destruction and deaths caused by a Christmas Eve tanker truck explosion near Johannesburg as officials reported the death toll rising to 15.

China's Covid surge raises odds of new coronavirus mutant



AGENCIES

Beijing, Dec 25: Could the Covid-19 surge in China unleash a new coronavirus mutant on the world?

Scientists don't know but worry that might happen. It could be a combination of strains. Or something entirely different, they say. "China has a population that is very large and there's limited immunity. And that seems to be the setting in which we may see an explosion of a new variant," said Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University.

Every new infection offers a chance for the coronavirus to mutate, and the virus is spreading rapidly in China. The country of 1.4 billion has largely abandoned its "zero Covid" policy. Though overall reported vaccination rates are high, booster levels are lower, especially among older people. Domestic vaccines have proven less effective against serious infection than Western-made messenger RNA versions. Many were given more than a year ago, meaning immunity has waned.

The result? Fertile ground for the virus to change. "When we've seen big waves of infection, it's often followed by new variants being generated," Ray said.

About three years ago, the original version of the coronavirus spread from China to the rest of the world and was eventually replaced by the delta variant, then omicron and its descendants, which continue plaguing the world today.

Dr. Shan-Lu Liu, who studies viruses at Ohio State University, said many existing omicron variants have been detected in China, including BE.7, which is extremely adept at evading immunity and is believed to be driving the current surge.

IN CHINA, MOST PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN EXPOSED TO THE CORONAVIRUS

CHINA'S VACCINES RELY ON AN OLDER TECHNOLOGY PRODUCING FEWER ANTIBODIES THAN MESSENGER RNA VACCINES

Experts said a partially immune population like China's puts particular pressure on the virus to change. Ray compared the virus to a boxer that "learns to evade the skills that you have and adapt to get around those."

One big unknown is whether a new variant will cause more severe disease. Experts say there's no inherent biological reason the virus has to become milder over time. "Much of the mildness we've experienced over the past six to 12 months in many parts of the world has been due to accumulated immunity either through vaccination or infection, not because the virus has changed" in severity, Ray said.

Given those realities, Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India, said it remains to be seen if the virus will follow the same pattern of evolution in China as it has in the rest of the world after vaccines came out. "Or," she asked, "will the pattern of evolution be completely different?"

Recently, the World Health Organisation expressed concern about reports of severe disease in China. Around the cities of Baoding and Langfang outside Beijing, hospitals have run out of intensive care beds and staff as severe cases surge.

China's plan to track the virus centers around three city hospitals in each province, where samples will be collected from walk-in patients who are very sick and all those who die every week, Xu Wenbo of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said at a briefing Tuesday.

1mn daily cases in Zhejiang

BEIJING: China's Zhejiang, a big industrial province near Shanghai, is battling around a million new daily Covid-19 infections, a number expected to double in the days ahead, the provincial government said Sunday. Despite a record surge of cases nationwide, China reported no Covid deaths on the mainland for the five days through Saturday, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said Sunday.

Major winter storm claims 24 lives across US

More than one million Americans and Canadians are facing Christmas Day without power as the massive winter storm continues to pummel North America

AGENCIES

Washington/New York, Dec 25: Millions of people hunkered down against a deep freeze Sunday morning to ride out the frigid storm that has killed at least 24 people across the United States and is expected to claim more lives after trapping some residents inside houses with heaping snow drifts and knocking out power to several hundred thousand homes and businesses.

The scope of the storm has been nearly unprecedented, stretching from the Great Lakes near Canada to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60 per cent of the US population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and tempera-



tures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the National Weather Service said.

Some 1,346 domestic and international flights were cancelled as of early Sunday, according to the tracking site FlightAware. Forecasters said a bomb cyclone

— when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm — had developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow. The storm unleashed its full fury on Buffalo, with hurricane-force winds and snow causing whiteout conditions, paralyzing

emergency response efforts — New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said almost every fire truck in the city was stranded Saturday — and shutting down the airport through Monday, according to officials.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 43 inches (109 centimeters) at 7 am Sunday. Daylight Sunday revealed cars nearly covered by 6-foot snowdrifts and thousands of houses, some adorned in unlit holiday displays, dark from a lack of power. With snow swirling down untouched and impassable streets, forecasters warned that an additional 1 to 2 feet of snow was possible in some areas through early Monday morning amid wind gusts of 40 mph.

3 NGOs suspend work in Afghan

AGENCIES

London, Dec 25: Three major NGOs Sunday announced a stop to their operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban banned local women from working for them, media reports said.

In a joint statement, Care International, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Save the Children said they would be un-



able to continue their work "without our female staff" and sought that women be allowed to continue working for them, the BBC said.

The three said the organisations "would not have jointly reached millions of Afghans in need since August 2021" were it not for their female staff. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan," their statement added.

RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE

Putin ready to negotiate

REUTERS

Moscow, Dec 25: Russia is ready to negotiate with all parties involved in the war in Ukraine but Kyiv and its Western backers have refused to engage in talks, President Vladimir Putin said in an interview aired Sunday.

Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine has triggered the most deadly conflict in Europe since World War II and the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. There is, thus far, little end in sight to the war.

The Kremlin says it will fight until all its aims are achieved while Kyiv says it will not rest until every Russian soldier is ejected from all of its territory, including Crimea which Russia annexed in 2014.

"We are ready to negotiate with everyone involved about acceptable solutions, but that is up to them - we are not the ones refusing to negotiate, they are," Putin told Rossiya 1 state television in the interview.

CIA Director William Burns said in an interview published this month that while most conflicts



PUTIN SAYS WEST TRYING TO BREAK UP RUSSIA

PUTIN ACCUSES KYIV, WEST OF REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE

UKRAINE: PUTIN NEEDS TO COME BACK TO REALITY

end in negotiation, the CIA's assessment was that Russia was not yet serious about a real negotiation to end the war.

An adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Putin needed to return to reality and acknowledge that it was Russia which did not want any negotiations. Ukrainians usually celebrate Christmas January

7, as do the Russians. But not this year, or at least not all of them. Some Orthodox Ukrainians have decided to observe Christmas December 25, like many Christians around the world.

The idea of commemorating the birth of Jesus in December was considered radical in Ukraine until recently, but Russia's invasion changed many hearts and minds.

China stages 'strike drills' around Taiwan

REUTERS

Beijing/Taipei, Dec 25: China's military said it had conducted "strike drills" in the sea and airspace around Taiwan Sunday in response to what it said was provocation from the democratically-governed island and the United States.

China staged war games around Taiwan in August following a visit to Taipei by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Saturday it condemned the United States for a new defence authorisation law that boosts military assistance for Taiwan.

In a brief statement, the Eastern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army said it had carried out "joint combat readiness patrols and joint firepower strike drills" around



Taiwan, though it did not specify the exact location.

"This is a resolute response to the current escalation of collusion and provocation from the United States and Taiwan," it added, without giving details. "Theatre forces will take all necessary measures to resolutely defend national sov-

eighty and territorial integrity." Taiwan's defence ministry said China's actions "once again highlight its mentality of resolving differences by force and destroying regional peace and stability".

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, said the drills showed Beijing was destroying regional peace and trying to cow Taiwan's people

Taiwan-US cooperation contributes to the freedom, openness, peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific, and Taiwan will continue to boost its military in accordance with the enemy threat and its self-defence needs, the ministry said.

Christmas cheer makes comeback in Jesus' birthplace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bethlehem/Jerusalem, Dec 25: The gloom of two years of Covid-19 pandemic has been replaced by cheerful Christmas spirit this year in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, with the return of pilgrims lifting the mood of the locals so heavily dependent on tourism.

Some five groups from different parts of India also joined the celebrations. "A total of about 250 Indian tourists came this year to attend the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. They were joined



by many Indians who live here," Ashok Ravi, the CEO of Scopus World Travel Ltd, told PTI.

Father Sreeba Kattumangantu, Cor Episcopa of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Kerala, led a group of 50 pilgrims to Bethlehem who came from Kochi for Christmas. "We prayed for peace in the Holy Land. We just hope people peacefully resolve their differences," Father Sreeba said.

There is a small community of Syrian Orthodox Christians in Jerusalem and a rather large one in Bethlehem. The Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem also has a prayer hall for the community. The traditional march led by Palestinian boy and girl scouts kicked off Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem on Saturday with a colourful march through Manger Square.

Why doesn't the rainbow have black, brown & grey in it?

RAINDROPS LOOK MORE LIKE LITTLE BALLS THAN THE TEARDROP SHAPES WE OFTEN DRAW. WHEN LIGHT HITS ONE OF THESE LITTLE BALLS OF WATER, THE LIGHT CAN CHANGE DIRECTION. WE CALL THIS "REFRACTION"

Why doesn't the rainbow have colours like black, brown and grey in it? Many of us have seen rainbows in the sky once the Sun starts shining again after a spell of rain. For us to see a rainbow, the conditions need to be just right.

We need some water droplets in the air - like rain or even fog - and we need the Sun to be behind us and quite low to the ground. This is because a rainbow is created by light passing through water droplets. The light that comes from the Sun seems white to us. But the

white light we see in everyday life is actually made up of a mix of different colours. When the light goes through a raindrop, these colours can separate out.

WAVES OF LIGHT Raindrops look more like little balls than the teardrop shapes we often draw. When light hits one of these little balls of water, the light can change direction. We call this "refraction".

Each of the different wavelengths is refracted by a slightly different amount. If the light hits the raindrop at the right angle, the refrac-



tion separates the wavelengths out into their different colours. As lots of light is refracted through lots of raindrops, we see these colours as

a rainbow in the sky. The order of the colours come in is set by how long their wavelength is. When we learn about the rainbow, we are

taught that there are seven colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. But this isn't strictly true.

Colours in the rainbow The different colours blend into each other, and it is difficult to tell where one colour ends and another begins. There are other colours in between, where they mix - like turquoise between blue and green.

Blue and green are next to each other in the colour spectrum, which is why we can see turquoise where they blend into each other. Some colours, though, are mixes of colours that aren't next to each other in the spectrum.

Brown, for instance, is a mix of red and green. But the red and green bands in the rainbow aren't next to each other, so we don't see them mix to make brown. The

same is the case for many other colours that are mixtures - if the colour bands in the rainbow don't overlap then they can't mix.

But there are two colours we would never see in a rainbow - black and white. Black is the absence of colour - it's what we see when there's no light at all. On the other hand, white is a combination of all the colours together. When light is refracted by raindrops it separates the white light out into the visible spectrum, meaning it is no longer white. Grey is a mix of black and white, and as we can't ever see black and white in a rainbow, we also can't see colours made by mixing them.

Next time you see a rainbow, look out for how many colours you can spot in it - and the colours that you can't see. THE CONVERSATION



of the day quote

The startup ecosystem's funding winter could last another 12 to 18 months and the industry may face a lot of turmoil and volatility

KALYAN KRISHNAMURTHY | CEO, FLIPKART

Bring down the interest rates because ours is a very interest rate-centric sector. It is high compared to what you pay in other parts of the world

SUMANT SINHA | PRESIDENT, ASSOCHAM

With increasing congestion across cities in India, we expect sales of its vehicles with auto gear shift to pick up further next year

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING & SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA

SHORT TAKES

CAIT announces 3-month-long stir

New Delhi: The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has announced a three-month nationwide agitation from January 1, 2023 till March 31, 2023, seeking streamlining of e-commerce and simplification as well as rationalisation of GST structure in the country. "It is a matter of great regret that even after spending more than three years, the Central Government has not been able to bring e-commerce policy and e-commerce rules under Consumer Protection Act whereas the foreign e-commerce companies are bent upon violating the law and the FDI policy quite openly under the nose of the government and no action has been taken so far," a statement issued by CAIT said. It said that "not only the Central Government but even the state governments are bigger culprit since trade and commerce is a state subject and even after suffering huge losses of GST revenue at the hands of foreign e-commerce companies, the state governments have become silent spectator and enjoying a sort of honeymoon with these companies by entering into different kinds of MOUs."

Global handset revenue falls YoY

New Delhi: The global smartphone handset market's revenue declined 3 per cent (on-year) in Q3 2022 to just above \$100 billion, according to latest research. A steeper revenue decline was prevented by a 10 per cent YoY revenue growth of Apple. Consequently, the 5G revenue share reached an all-time high of 80 per cent, according to Counterpoint Research. The record shipment contribution (46 per cent) of 5G handsets, which cost five times an average non-5G handset, also added to the average selling price (ASP) and revenue growth. In terms of shipments, the overall handset market saw a 12 per cent YoY decline during the quarter.

ITR reforms likely in 2023

New Delhi: Riding on the back of a 26 per cent surge in tax collections, the government is set to unveil the next set of reforms in tax administration by pruning the number of forms available for filing Income Tax Return (ITR) to improve taxpayers' experience and reduce the time taken to file returns. Both direct and indirect tax collections have been buoyant in 2022 in clear indication of revival of the economy after the pandemic and also as a result of government efforts to plug tax leakages.



Twitter isn't secure yet, just not in the fast lane to bankruptcy. Still much work to do
ELON MUSK | CEO, TWITTER

GLOBAL HANDSET REVENUE FALL

The global smartphone handset market's revenue declined 3 per cent (on-year) in Q3 2022 to just above \$100 billion, according to latest research. A steeper revenue decline was prevented by a 10 per cent YoY revenue growth of Apple. Consequently, the 5G revenue share reached an all-time high of 80 per cent



PEERS SUFFER

Sensex steers global gyrations

SENSEX FACED ITS MOMENT OF RECKONING IN 2022 AS FED FUSILADES TO OUTSHINE GLOBAL PEERS IN 'YEAR OF POLYCRISIS'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: After a two-year liquidity-fuelled bull run, the BSE Sensex faced its moment of reckoning in 2022 as Russia marched into Ukraine, the US Federal Reserve came out all guns blazing in its war against inflation and a cataclysm engulfed global financial markets.

The aftershocks of the Covid-19 pandemic combined with geopolitical upheavals, a supply shock in the energy markets and synchronised monetary policy tightening by central banks across the world meant the global economy was engulfed in a constant tangle of 'polycrisis'.

But, the unwavering faith of domestic investors kept Dalal Street relatively unscathed and the Indian benchmarks shrugged off the gloomy cues with aplomb.

After a lacklustre spell for most of the year, Sensex started picking up momentum as the festive season approached. It closed at its all-time high of 63,284.19 December 1. However, hopes of a year-end Santa Claus rally were dashed as spiralling Covid cases in China sparked renewed fears of a global pandemic wave, sending bulls scurrying for cover.

The credit for this relative out-performance goes largely to the domestic retail and institutional investors, who kept the faith despite the steady drumbeat of negative headlines and absorbed the record selloff by foreign funds.

Compare this to the panic of the global financial crisis of 2008, when the Sensex had collapsed by over 50 per cent as FIIs pressed the exit button. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have pulled out a record ₹1.21 lakh crore from Indian equities in 2022 so far, in lockstep with



Sensex closed at its all-time high of 63,284.19 Dec 1

The Sensex is up just 1.12% year-to-date (till Dec 25), but is still the world's best-performing large market index

In fact, none of the major global indices have managed to muster gains in this brutal year, including the Dow Jones (down 9.24%), FTSE 100 (dipped 0.43%), Nikkei (shed 10.47%), Hang Seng (lost 15.82%) and the Shanghai Composite Index (dropped 16.15%)

WINNERS	LAGGARDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of retail investors' shareholding in NSE-listed firms reached an all-time high of 7.42% (around ₹19 lakh crore) as March 31 Mutual fund investments through the systematic investment plans or the SIP route too have been on a rising trend despite market fluctuations, touching a record high of ₹13,306 crore in November (both equity and debt segments) This pushed the Assets Under Management (AUM) of the 43-player MF industry to a lifetime peak of ₹40.49 lakh crore at the end of November 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPOs are trading anywhere between 15 to 70% below their listing price, wiping off thousands of crores of investor wealth Paytm earned the dubious distinction of being the world's worst-performing large IPO in a decade Big Tech meltdown in the US, where Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and other tech titans lost a staggering \$5.6 trillion of market capitalisation, reverberated through the global markets, puncturing both valuations and investor egos

rate hikes by the US Fed which have triggered an exodus from emerging markets, including India.

In contrast, domestic investors displayed the sharp instincts of market veterans and 'bought the dip' with

a vengeance. India's robust fundamentals and strong corporate performance at a time when the global economy teetered on the brink of a recession were another tailwind for equities.

FRESH COVID WOES

FPIs invest ₹11,557 cr in Dec

OVERALL, FPIS HAVE PULLED OUT A NET SUM OF ₹1.21 LAKH CRORE FROM THE EQUITY MARKETS SO FAR IN 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: Foreign investors have infused a net ₹11,557 crore in Indian equities in December so far despite a market correction and increasing concerns over re-emergence of Covid in China and some other parts of the world.

Going ahead, macro data from the US and COVID news will drive FPI flows and the markets in the near term, said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

According to data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) invested a net sum of ₹11,557 crore in equities during December 1-23.



This comes following a net investment of over ₹36,200 crore in November primarily due to weakening of the US dollar index and positivity about overall macro-economic trends.

Prior to this, foreign investors pulled out ₹8 crore in October and ₹7,624 crore in September, data with the depositories showed.

"Despite correction in the markets, increasing concerns over re-emergence of Covid in some parts of the world and recession worries in the US, FPIs remained net buyers in the Indian equity markets (in December)," said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar

India. However, the quantum of net inflow was much lower at a little over ₹1,000 crore in the week ended December 23, compared to ₹6,055 crore recorded in the previous week.

The fall in net inflow does indicate that foreign investors are gradually turning cautious given the recent developments and ongoing uncertainties, he noted.

Also, in the midst of the ongoing uncertainty, many investors would also have chosen to book profits with Indian markets touching all time highs recently.

In the first half of December, FPIs were buyers in autos, capital goods, FMCG and real estate stocks, while they were sellers in consumer durables, oil and gas, power and financials.

Foreign investors have withdrawn a net sum of ₹2,900 crore from the debt markets during December.

Barring India, FPI flows were negative across emerging markets such as the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Indonesia so far this month.

UK wages next year will be at lowest level since 2006

THE REPORT CONFIRMS THAT WAGES HAVE STAGNATED IN BRITAIN EVEN AS INFLATION HITS DOUBLE DIGITS, SPARKING THE WORST COST OF LIVING CRISIS IN DECADES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Dec 25: Brits hoping for a new-year salary bump to offset soaring food and energy costs may be disappointed, media reported. The average British worker's pay in 2023 is expected to fall back to 2006 levels, once inflation is taken into account, according to PwC.



Real wages, which factor in inflation, are expected to fall by as much as 3 per cent in 2023 and another 2 per cent in 2024, PwC has predicted in a report on the UK economy, CNN reported.

The report confirms that wages have stagnated in Britain even as

inflation hits double digits, sparking the worst cost of living crisis in decades, CNN reported.

That's led to widespread strikes across the UK economy, encompassing railways, schools, nurses, hospitals and the postal service. On Friday, passport officers

India to continue to attract foreign investors in 2023

FDI is important as India would require huge investments in the coming years to overhaul its infrastructure sector to boost growth. Healthy growth in foreign inflows helps maintain the balance of payments and the value of the rupee



INVESTMENT INFLOWS	
INDIA HAS REGISTERED ITS HIGHEST-EVER TOTAL FDI INFLOWS OF \$84.84 BILLION IN 2021-22	FDI EQUITY INFLOWS, HOWEVER, CONTRACTED BY 14% TO \$26.9 BILLION DURING THE APRIL-SEPT PERIOD THIS FISCAL
FOREIGN INVESTMENTS WORTH \$42.5 BILLION DURING JAN-SEPT 2022. IT STOOD AT \$51.3 BILLION IN 2021	TOTAL FDI INFLOWS TOO HAS DECLINED TO \$39 BILLION DURING H1 OF THIS FISCAL AS AGAINST \$42.86 BILLION IN 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: India may attract eyes of overseas investors in 2023 as well on account of measures such as rollout of the production linked incentive (PLI) schemes and projection of healthy economic growth, though global economic uncertainties due to monetary policy tightening in the US and ongoing Russia-Ukraine war may remain cause for concern.

Steps to promote ease of doing business, skilled manpower, presence of natural resources, liberal FDI policies, huge domestic market and prospects of healthy GDP growth are the reasons for optimism on the foreign inflows front for India in 2023 but issues such as delay in enforcement of contracts, cumbersome procedures and high interest rates are still sore points.

According to the latest world investment report 2022 of UNCTAD, the recovery of greenfield investment in industry remains fragile, especially in developing countries.

It has also stated that the fallout of the war in Ukraine with the triple food, fuel and finance crises, along with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and climate disruption, are adding stress, particularly in developing countries.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Anurag Jain said India is the preferred investment destination due to series of measures such as liberalisation in the FDI policy, steps to further promote ease of doing business, reducing compliance burden for industry, rollout of the PLI schemes and the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan for integrated infrastructure development.

"For the past eight consecutive years, a new record FDI flow into the country has been set.

The key sectors which attracted the maximum FDI include services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. At present, FDI is prohibited in as many as nine sectors - lottery, gambling and betting, chit funds, nidhi company, real estate business, and manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes using tobacco.

However, given the challenges of sluggish economic growth and geopolitical realities, there are bound to be challenges in times ahead," Jain told PTI.

Development of the National Single Window System (NSWS) portal is completely changing the way businesses used to seek approvals and it will also help investors to come to India, Jain said, adding free trade agreements with the UAE and Australia too will help attract healthy FDI inflows in 2022-23.

The PLI scheme was announced for 14 sectors, including white goods, telecom and auto components with an outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities and exports. So far, 650 applications have been approved under 13 sectors.

Total FDI into India has reached \$887.76 billion between April 2000 to September 2022.

About 26 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (23 per cent), the US (9 per cent), the Netherlands (7 per cent), Japan (6 per cent) and the UK (5 per cent). The UAE, Germany, Cyprus, and Cayman Islands accounted for 2 per cent each.

but warned travellers to expect delays and disruptions on arrival in Britain.

The report offered some hope. Despite the hit to wages, more than 300,000 UK workers could re-join the labor market in 2023, reducing economic inactivity and alleviating staff shortages in highly skilled sectors, according to PwC.

At the same time, increased immigration to the UK could directly contribute 19 billion pound (\$23 billion) to the economy, boosting GDP growth by 1 per cent "even as the whole economy contracts," PwC said.



Ashwin, Iyer script thrilling win

8TH WICKET STAND OF 71 RUNS DASHES BANGLADESH'S HOPES OF MAIDEN TEST VICTORY AGAINST INDIA

AGENCIES

Mirpur, Dec 25: A dogged 71-run unbeaten stand between Shreyas Iyer (29 n o, 46b, 4x4) and Ravichandran Ashwin (42 n o, 62b, 4x4, 1x6) saved India the blushes as they fought back from a hopeless situation to pull off a three-wicket win over Bangladesh in the second Test and clinch the series 2-0 here Sunday. With India at 74 for seven chasing 145, Bangladesh were on course for their first ever Test win against their formidable neighbours. However, Ashwin and Iyer changed all that with their eighth wicket stand.

Bangladesh off-spinner Mehidy Hazan Miraz (5/63) gave his all on way to a five-wicket haul but it did not prove to be enough.

The come-from-behind win meant India wrapped up the series 2-0 to strengthen their chances of a second straight final appearance in the World Test Championships.

Bangladesh spinners were all over the Indians after the start of play Sunday. Resuming the innings at 45 for four, India lost Jaydev Unadkat (13) in the second over of the day. Rishabh Pant (9) also did not last long and when Axar Patel (34) fell to Miraz, it looked all over for India. Then came the match-winning partnership between Ashwin and Iyer to help India's cause.

The duo was happy to preserve their wickets initially before Iyer changed the momentum with back-to-back boundaries off Shikib Al Hasan in the 41st over. Miraz offered a loose ball in the following over and



WINNING MOMENT: Jaydev Unadkat hold aloft the series win trophy as the Indian cricketers pose for a group photo at Mirpur

Iyer was quick to make room and punch it through cover for another boundary.

Bangladesh resorted to pace in their bid to break the stand but the plan did not work. Ashwin, who was dropped at short-leg on one, collected a couple of boundaries off right arm seamer Khaled Ahmed to bring the target down to just 26 runs.

Miraz was brought into the attack as the last throw of dice but Ashwin pulled him for a six before back-to-back boundaries, sealing the win for the visitors.

Despite the win, India have a lot of thinking to do going into

India jump to No. 2 spot

Dubai: India's 2-0 series sweep over Bangladesh consolidated their position Sunday at the No.2 spot behind leaders Australia in the ICC World Test Championship standings. The series win brightened India's hope for a back-to-back WTC final appearance. India currently have 58.92 percentage points while Australia have 76.92 percentage points at the top of the table. Third in the list is South Africa who have 54.55 percentage points, but they will have to win the remaining two Tests against Australia if they are to have any chance of reaching the final. India's advantage is that they will play Australia in February at home.

the home series against Australia. The form of the top-order is a big concern.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 227 and

231 lost to India 314 and 145 for seven (Ravi Ashwin 42 n o, Shreyas Iyer 29 n o, Mehidy Hazan Miraz 5/63) by three wickets.

Djokovic hoping for warm Oz welcome

Dubai: Novak Djokovic is hoping he will receive a warm welcome from the public when he returns to the Australian Open tennis tournament next month, now that the drama surrounding his vaccination status and deportation is officially behind him. A nine-time champion at Melbourne Park, Djokovic was unable to compete in the opening Grand Slam of the season in 2022 after he was deported from Australia over fears he would incite anti-vax sentiment. The World No.5 is pleased he will get the chance to vie for a 10th title in Melbourne. "I always ask the best from myself so let's see. Over the years I've been really fortunate to start very strong in Australia and I love playing there. Hopefully, I will get a good reception this time," Djokovic told reporters here. "I have been fortunate to win so many titles in Melbourne. It is because of the fantastic support I get there," Djokovic added.

Gombau banking on attacking football

Kochi: Odisha FC (OFC) head coach Josep Gombau said Sunday that it will be an equal game Monday evening when his team face Kerala Blasters FC in an ISL game 23 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, here. He also said that OFC would gun for three points and play attacking brand of football. "It will be a very good game against a very good side in Kerala Blasters FC. We are equals at the table, playing away in a nice environment, and it is a game where every single coach and player wants to be there to try and get a good result," Gombau said in the pre-match press conference. "As a coach, when the team are not scoring you need to worry. Hopefully during training, we have managed to end our shooting woes. The boys have rectified their mistakes and we have the potential to score many goals," the coach added.

U-15 eves leave

Bhubaneswar: Janvi Sarangi has been selected to lead the 16-member Odisha under-15 squad that has already left for Bhillai, Chhattisgarh to participate in the BCCI's age group one-day tournament. The Odisha eves will play their first game December 26 against Mizoram followed by matches against Hyderabad, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh and Andhra Pradesh. Former Odisha player Madhusmita Behera has been nominated as coach and manager of the squad while Amrita Tripathy is accompanying the team as a physiotherapist. **The other members of the squad are:** Smrutti R Mohanta, Bijaylaxmi Behera, Ananya Behera, Shrutilekha Mallick, Pratyasha Bag, Sunita Das, Anwesha Biswal, Sheetal Jaiswal (wicket-keeper), Sreya Priyadarshini, Juli Behera, Jayasoni Murmu, Saloni K Ram, Samiksha Mandal, Prurnima Behera and Priyanka Behera. AGENCIES

We let the game drift: Ashwin

RAHUL ADMITS INDIA MISSED KULDEEP DURING THE GAME, BUT HAS 'NO REGRETS' AFTER VICTORY

AGENCIES

Mirpur, Dec 25: Man of the match Ravichandran Ashwin said Sunday after India's three-wicket victory over Bangladesh that he always backed himself even though India were reduced to 74 for seven. "I always knew the pressure would shift to Bangladesh as we would come closer to the target and that is exactly what happened," Ashwin said after the game.

Ashwin pointed out that he felt the players didn't trust their defences, which made things easier for Bangladesh at one stage. "We didn't have much batting left. It was one of those games where we let the game drift whenever we could have shut it off. Shreyas (Iyer) batted beautifully. Sometimes these situations you feel like you have to get ahead of things and we managed to do that," Ashwin added.

Stand-in skipper KL Rahul admitted that India missed the services of left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in the second innings but said he has 'no regret' about leaving him out of the final Test against Bangladesh.

"I don't regret the decision. It was the right one. If you look at the wickets, our fast bowlers too have taken



GRITTY SHOW: Ravichandran Ashwin hit one to the leg-side during his match-winning knock Sunday

many wickets and they had a lot of assistance. There was a lot of inconsistent bounce," Rahul said at the post-match media interaction.

Rahul was all praise for Ashwin and Iyer. "He (Iyer) has been around the team for a long time. I'm so happy for him that he grabbed the opportunity with both hands. The way he played today (Sunday) was phenomenal. He made it look really easy," Rahul said.

"As for Ashwin, he brought his international experience into play. As long as those two were out in the middle, I did not lose hope. However, I must admit that we were under

pressure in the second innings," Rahul stated.

The two-Test series proved to be disastrous for Rahul (57 runs, average: 14.25) and Virat Kohli (45 runs; 15.00) but the stand-in skipper blamed it on the quick transition from white ball to red ball cricket.

"When you play all three formats, it is a bit tricky to jump from one format to another. Personally, it takes a bit of time to get back into the groove and understand, to get your mind back to what you were doing right. Each format is a challenge on how quickly you can adapt," Rahul asserted.

All eyes on Arsenal as Premier League resumes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Dec 25: The Premier League returns to action Monday (December 26) for the traditional Boxing Day fixtures, just eight days after the FIFA World Cup final in Qatar.

Arsenal's game at home to West Ham is the standout fixture, and all eyes will be on whether Mikel Arteta's exciting side can continue the form that took them into the World Cup break with a five-point lead over Manchester City. The big worry for Arteta is the knee injury suffered by striker Gabriel Jesus in the World Cup, which will keep him out for a significant period of time. Defender William Saliba is also a doubtful starter.

The World Cup is also a factor for Liverpool's visit to Aston Villa, with Villa's first-choice keeper Emiliano Martinez ruled out after his heroics for Argentina over the past month. The club is hoping Martinez will be available for their



Arsenal will miss Gabriel Jesus

next match, while Philippe Coutinho and Jacob Ramsey are also both doubtful for the game. Liverpool are likely to be without Ibrahima Konate after his World Cup exploits.

Brentford and Tottenham Hotspur get the ball rolling Monday with the news that Brentford coach Thomas Frank has signed a new contract until 2027. The southwest London club is sweating to see if striker Ivan Toney could face a ban for breaking betting regulations. Harry Kane may sit out for Spurs as he is recovering from niggles.

Pele continues fight against cancer with family around him

LEGENDARY FOOTBALLER CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS IN HOSPITAL AS PRAYERS ACROSS THE WORLD POUR IN FOR HIM

AGENCIES

Sao Paulo, Dec 25: The eldest daughter of Brazilian football legend Pele said her father 'was still in the fight' as he battles advancing cancer at the Albert Einstein hospital here. Kely Cristina Nascimento posted an image on Instagram in which she is seen embracing the 82-year-old with his face only partially visible, a section of the Brazilian media said, Saturday.

"We're still here, in the fight and in the faith. One more night together," Nascimento said in a message that accompanied the photo. She also stated that her dad, though in a lot of pain, is talking normally.

Pele was admitted to the Albert Einstein hospital late last month to treat a respiratory infection and re-assess chemotherapy. Nascimento had announced Wednesday that her father would spend Christmas in hospital after doctors said he required 'more extensive care'.

Among those to send messages of support to Pele in recent weeks is France forward Kylian Mbappe, who urged his followers to 'pray for the King'. Pele also has the highest



Pele with his daughter Kely Cristina Nascimento

PHOTO INSTAGRAM

regard for Mbappe and in the past has lavished praise on the French footballer.

Edson Cholbi Nascimento, one of Pele's sons and known as Edinho, arrived Saturday. Edinho, who works for a soccer club in southern Brazil, had earlier said then that only doctors could help his father. "He (Edson) is here," Kely said in a posting on Instagram with a picture showing her sitting next to Edinho and two of his children at the hospital. "I am not leaving, no one will take me out of here."

Pele's most recent Instagram

post came after Argentina's victory over France in the World Cup final last Sunday, in which he congratulated the South American team and Lionel Messi for their 'deserved' triumph. Considered by many as the greatest ever footballer, Pele is the only player to win the World Cup three times, having lifted the sport's most coveted trophy in 1958, 1962 and 1970.

In recent years, Pele has faced a series of health issues, including problems related to his spine, hip, knee and kidneys. Last year he underwent surgery to remove a tumor.

Jr archers shine in Asia Cup with five gold medals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sharjah, Dec 25: The Indian junior archers reigned supreme in the Asia Cup Stage III by returning with nine medals, including five gold here Sunday. The archers also bagged three silver and one bronze medal.

The biggest medal haul came from the compound section where Indian archers bagged seven of the eight medals up from grabs, including a clean sweep in the individual women's section where Pragati, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur took the top three spots. Priyansh and Ojas Deotale bagged gold and silver in the compound individual section.

The Indian compound archers also topped the team events in both men's and women's sections, defeating Korea en route to gold medals.

It was only in the compound mixed pair event, India returned empty-handed after the duo of Ojas and Pragati went down to Vietnam in the quarterfinals.

In recurve section, India bagged one gold and one silver medal. The men's team of Akash Mrinal Chauhan and Parth Salunkhe won the gold defeating Korea.

Tisha Punia and Salunkhe settled for a silver after losing to Kai-Han Yang and Szu-Min Su of Chinese Taipei in the recurve mixed team event.

All tickets sold out in Rourkela

Excitement at its peak for hockey World Cup

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: As the clock nears the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 in the Odisha capital and Rourkela, the excitement and enthusiasm among fans across the state have already reached fever peak. The World Cup trophy arrived here Sunday amid much excitement.

The tournament, which will begin January 13, 2023, will see 16 elite hockey teams from around the world in action.

Eager to witness the thrilling hockey action taking place in Rourkela for the first time, fans gathered in large numbers outside the newly constructed Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium since the opening of the counters December 19 to buy tickets. And within a week, all match tickets in Rourkela have been sold out. A total of 20 matches will take place at the new 'jewel' of hockey, the Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, which has a seating capacity of over 20,000.

Meanwhile, the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium here which has a sitting capacity of over 15,000, will host 24 matches, including cross-overs, quarterfinals, semifinals, and the final.

The Indian Men's Hockey Team, who are placed in Pool D, along with Spain will also begin their campaign against Spain on the



The FIH World Cup trophy upon its arrival in Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

opening day of the tournament in Rourkela. India will then play England, January 15 at the same venue. For their third game January 19 against Wales, they will travel back to the Kalinga Stadium.

The 16 teams competing in the tournament are Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, India, Argentina, Germany, New Zealand, England, France, Korea, Malaysia, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Chile and Wales. Many feel that other than Australia, the hosts also have a chance to finish on top of the podium. Fans who have bought tickets are hoping for that day.

Tite attacked for Brazil's WC exit

FORMER NATIONAL COACH ROBBED OF GOLD CHAIN WHILE OUT ON A MORNING WALK

AGENCIES

Sao Paulo, Dec 25: Former coach of the Brazilian football team Tite was roughed up in this city by a miscreant a couple of days back, police said Sunday. Though Tite is keeping mum on the matter, police are investigating the matter. It should be stated here that Tite had resigned as coach of the Brazilian team immediately after their quarterfinal loss to Croatia in the FIFA World Cup.

Sources said that Tite and his wife were out on a morning walk when the miscreant attacked the former Brazilian coach. He snatched a gold chain Tite was wearing and allegedly blasted the coach over Brazil's elimination from the World



Cup. The 61-year-old had been in charge of the Samba Boys since 2016 and led them to Copa America success three years ago.

However, as his wife chased the

miscreant, Tite did not suffer any further harm. Later on police said that the man had come to steal a cycle from Tite's neighbour's house. However, seeing the coach the mis-

creant decided to target him.

It should be stated that host of players were quick to pay tribute to Tite after his resignation, with Paris Saint-Germain Brazilian superstar Neymar leading them. "I knew you as a coach and knew that you were very good, but as a person you are great! You know who I am and that's what matters to me," Neymar had said in a tweet.

"I want to thank you openly for everything, all the teachings that you have given us - there were so many. You will always be one of the best coaches I've ever had or will ever have," Neymar added.

Tite had promised to quit back in February, revealing he wanted one more shot at winning the World Cup after leading them to the quarters in 2018 too. He had said, "I'm going once Brazil's World Cup campaign is over."

However, after the crushing Croatia loss, he said: "As I said, my cycle is over. I said it over a year-and-a-half ago. I'm not a man of two words."